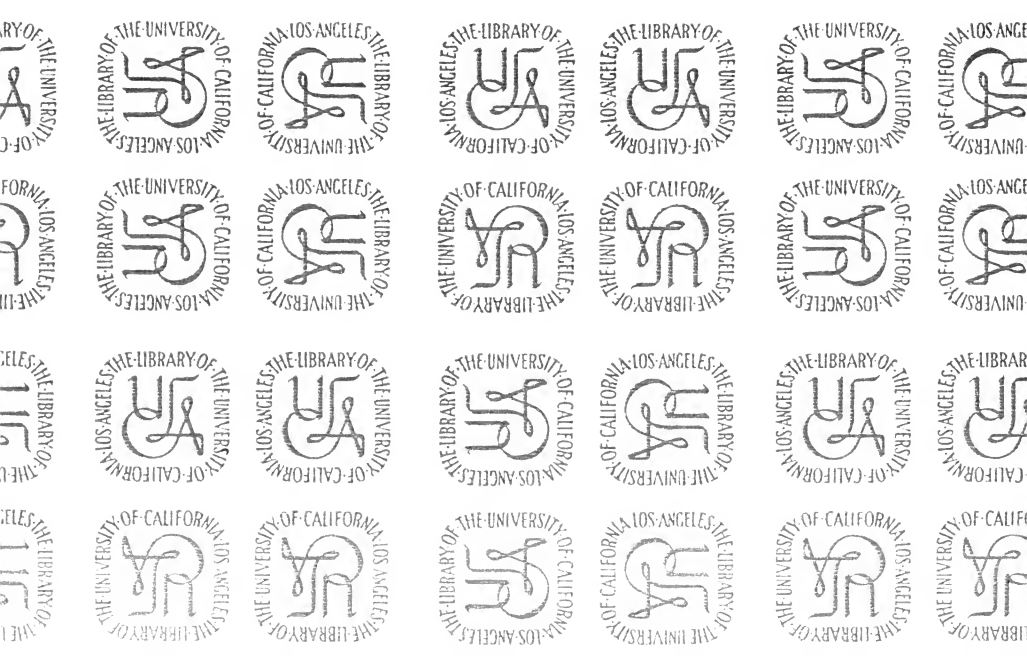
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WORKS OF

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"DOBELL DREW A REVOLVER AND SHOT THE ITALIAN DEAD." (*See page* 260.)

THE CHRONICLES OF QUINCY ADAMS SAWYER, DETECTIVE

By
Charles Felton Pidgin
Author of "Quincy Adams Sawyer," "The Further Adventures of Quincy Adams Sawyer," "Stephen Holton," etc.
AND
J. M. Taylor

Illustrated by
Harold James Cue

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THE CHRONICLES OF QUINCY ADAMS SAWYER DETECTIVE

I

THE AFFAIR OF THE DOUBLE THUMB PRINT

WITH the death abroad of the Honourable Quincy Adams Sawyer, United States Ambassador to Vienna, his son, also named Quincy Adams, came into possession of the remnants of what had once been a large fortune. The fortune, however, had been greatly impaired, as the tastes of the senior Quincy Adams Sawyer had developed more in the directon of adventure and travel than in that of sober business, a fact which led eventually to bad investments and disastrous results. Therefore, when the elder Sawyer, cool and debonair to the end, shook his son's hand for the last time and calmly bade him farewell, he left behind an amount sufficient to provide a small income for that son, but

by no means sufficient to make him entirely independent.

To the younger Quincy Adams Sawyer, however, the loss of his father's fortune, which had always been his to command, was a matter of minor importance. As the father had lived with the main idea of seeing strange sights and meeting new people, so, likewise, did the son find that strange adventures and unexpected experiences were to him as the breath of life. Nor did this fact force itself on him at the time of his father's death, it having been well founded long previous to that event, for the younger Quincy had led a constantly changing existence since his earliest youth.

When he entered the high school in his younger days, after a decidedly tempestuous course through the lower grades, it was with an already established reputation for deviltry. But, once in that school, and to the surprise of his new instructors, who, it must be confessed, acknowledged his introduction to them with a decided feeling of regret, he devoted himself to his studies with a mild docility that was astounding. The reason for this apparent change was a peculiar one. Quincy, purely in the pursuit of his own inclinations, had made friends with the police inspectors and had entered upon an exhaustive study of police matters, a study to which many subjects in his school curriculum, as he early dis-

covered, lent a wealth of information that was invaluable. For instance, he early made the discovery that, if one were able to deal out, in grudgingly small amount, scientific information concerning chemical analysis and kindred subjects, it was easy to secure in return information concerning the more ordinary points of police work. Thus Quincy's four years in the high school passed with mutual profit to himself and to the police inspectors.

At the end of his course he entered the great university located in the back-yard of his home city, carrying with him resources that were invaluable in the particular style of course he had selected. He was personally acquainted with every police captain on the force, could call every inspector by his first name, and had shown at various times marked talent in the actual work of the detection of criminals. As Quincy's education progressed, so, in like ratio, did that of the police inspectors, particularly along the lines of chemistry and psychology. This fact was perhaps due not so much to the desire for increased learning on the part of the inspectors, or the hunger for knowledge on Quincy's side, as to the spirited arguments with which Quincy's visits to the police stations were enlivened, for it has long been established that men cannot continuously argue along given lines without gaining more and more information with which to strengthen their argu-

ments. By the time Quincy had completed the first half of his freshman year so great had his friendship with the police become that it was a generally acknowledged fact throughout the college that Sawyer could easily murder the mayor and escape without so much as a reprimand!

By the time he had finished his sophomore year he knew police work and methods from Alpha to Omega. Also, he had exhausted the resources of his university so far as sociology was concerned and had browsed about casually through what few other courses chanced to appeal to him. He had joined every club and secret society to which he was eligible, had been in countless altercations with the faculty, and had generally blazed a path that was startling in its numerous ramifications. Then, as a grand climax, the influence of the police not extending to the dean and the faculty, he was unconditionally expelled. Expelled with a thoroughness and expedition that left a rankling suspicion that the faculty, as a whole, was delighted with the opportunity of dispensing with his presence, and sincerely trusted that he might never stray their way again.

Nothing daunted by his summary removal, Quincy packed his trunk, shook hands all around with the police inspectors, who watched his leave-taking with sincere regret, and blithely departed for Vienna, where his father received him with

solemn words and twinkling eyes, for Quincy's progress had been regularly reported. The quiet life of a foreign embassy, however, had no attraction for Quincy, and it was but a short time before he once more packed up his belongings and again set forth into the world at large. During the five ensuing years he travelled ceaselessly, visiting every civilized nation on the globe's face, to say nothing of many nations which were far from being civilized. Being a rolling stone, he, of course, gathered no moss, but in place of that rather questionable commodity he gathered what in later years was to be of inestimable value to him; namely, information and experience.

Therefore, at the time of his father's death, the fact that his expected fortune had vanished in thin air lowered Quincy's spirits not a jot. He had already decided on the profession which he intended to follow, and, in order to establish himself in that profession, his little remnant of money would be as useful as would have been his father's vast fortune. Consequently, he took up his residence in Boston, his early home. He said nothing of his purpose for a time, but quietly set to work to establish a reputation for himself in private detective work. He kept in the background as much as was possible, not wishing to launch himself until at least one important case had come his way and been successfully

dealt with. At last, after a year of work and waiting, it came. His name flashed into the limelight like a comet across a dark sky, and, within a week, the city in general, and his old friends in particular, knew that Quincy Adams Sawyer had returned to his former haunts and had established himself as a private detective.

His project at last auspiciously launched, Quincy abandoned his previous mode of living and turned the suite of rooms, which had served him as living-rooms and office combined, into a suite for living purposes only. He then removed his professional quarters to a small office in the centre of the city, hung out a brass plate on which appeared the single word "Sawyer," and plunged into the work which his sudden fame had brought him with all the zest and power of which he was capable. His standing as a detective was now firmly established and grew day by day as his old friends, the police inspectors, judiciously turned many private cases his way. That he had a marked ability in their particular line they had all along known, and, now that he had chosen, in a way, to cast his lot among them, they welcomed him with a heartiness which left nothing to be desired. And, in return, Quincy's regard for his old friends increased. The staff had changed somewhat since his earlier acquaintance with it, many of the old faces were gone and many new

ones had appeared in their places, but the sum total made up the same old staff and to its members he was kin.

His friendly relations with the local police thus renewed, it was consequently no surprise to Quincy when Inspector Gates, of the department, appeared one morning in the doorway of his office and glanced questioningly within. The inspector was one of the newer men of the staff, and had gained his promotion from the ranks during Quincy's absence from the country. He was a young man of decidedly pleasing appearance, whose frank face and honest eyes invited both trust and friendship, while his age, being about equal in years to Quincy's, proved that he had intelligence of a marked degree, since he had so early in life been chosen for the staff of inspectors. He had, furthermore, the face of a statesman coupled with the build of a prize-fighter, and Quincy surveyed his mighty bulk with admiration as he paused in the doorway.

"Are you busy this morning, Mr. Sawyer?" Gates inquired in a voice of drawing-room politeness.

"Not particularly so," Quincy replied smilingly. "Take a chair and, here, have a cigar."

Gates deposited his weight on a protesting chair, accepted the proffered cigar, and stared at Quincy speculatively.

" Mr. Sawyer," he said finally, " I want your help in a case. You see it's this way. I'm a comparatively new man on the staff and this is my first big case. If I'm successful in it, my future is assured; but, if I fail, it may be years before I get another chance. The case is a peculiar one and one offering every chance of failure. That is the selfish end of it, but there is also another side. There is an old lady involved, and also she's such a bully old lady and she takes everything so cool that I'm blamed if I'm not sorry for her, and I want to succeed in this case for her sake as well as mine. I don't mean that she's suspected of anything, but she seems to be on the receiving end of the crime, so to speak, and she certainly is in danger from some source or other. That's why I came here, hoping that if you did not chance to be very busy you might give me a lift."

" Of course," Quincy replied as Gates paused uncertainly. " My business is very quiet at present, and if you have an interesting case I shall be overjoyed to help you out with it. You fellows have done me a good many neighbourly turns of late, and I'd be a poor stick indeed if I were not ready to reciprocate. Now let me hear the details, please."

" The story is this," Gates stated slowly. " Mrs. Marion Patterson and her grandson, Fred Hemenway, live in one of the old-time houses in the Back

Bay. Mrs. Patterson is reputed to be comfortably well off, although I do not believe that she is considered wealthy in the broad sense of the word. She lives very quietly, keeps no carriage or automobile and only one servant, a woman who has been with her since she first commenced housekeeping as a young bride, years ago. Hemenway, her grandson, is a young man engaged in the real estate business, although his business is centred largely, I imagine, on property owned by his grandmother, as she holds numerous houses and buildings in this city and the neighbouring towns. He is, so far as I have been able to discover, an excellent fellow in every way. That for the introduction.

"The story proper commences at a time a week ago, last Tuesday evening, to be exact. Hemenway, on that evening, had remained down town in his office, after hours, to work on some papers that are connected with a land jumble he is mixed up in. According to his story he had worked until about ten o'clock without interruption, and had almost succeeded in tracing out the various points which he desired to settle. Then, without any warning whatever, without his even becoming aware that any person had entered his office, he was struck on the head and rendered unconscious. He did not regain consciousness until after midnight, and, even when his senses returned, they were in such befogged

shape that he could fix his mind on no subject save his desire to return home. Consequently it was not until the next morning that the police were notified and I was detailed on the case. I went to his office with him and found things much as he had described them. The papers he had been working over were still on the desk, somewhat damaged by ink, as the ink bottle had been overturned during the assault and its contents had flowed freely over the desk and everything upon it.

"The most curious part of the whole affair, however, was the fact that, so far as we could discover, not a single article in the room had been taken or disturbed. Whether Hemenway's assailant became frightened after striking the blow, and fancied that he had done more damage than he had originally intended; or whether he intended to kill Hemenway outright, and had no other purpose in view, I have been unable to decide. But, whatever his purpose may have been, the fact remains that nothing was disturbed. He did, however, leave behind him a clue. The clue was a thumb print firmly printed and clearly defined on the door just above the knob. He had, you see, carelessly smeared his thumb with the ink from Hemenway's desk, and, on making his exit, had tranferred the ink to the door, leaving a perfect impression of his thumb. I photographed the impression and have made a careful search of

the records at headquarters, but I can find no print there which corresponds to the one on Hemenway's door. Therefore the conclusion must be that the assailant is not an old-timer or we would have his finger prints.

"I worked on the case unceasingly, as I wished to solve it, not only for the ends of justice, but for my own credit as well, and you, knowing police departments as you do, will realize that such a desire was not so completely selfish as it sounds. But work as I would, I was unable to make any headway whatever. Then came the next step in the case, and one which was even more surprising than the first. Last night the old lady was assaulted, and I assure you, Sawyer, that, had she been one of my own relatives, I could not have felt more savage toward her assailant than I do, for if there was ever an old lady who was white clear through, she is the one.

"The assault happened in a manner somewhat similar to that on her grandson. She was in her sitting-room, reading, while she waited for her grandson, who was again detained in his office by night work. She is somewhat deaf, so it is not surprising that she heard no sounds such as would have been made by a man forcibly entering the house. The assailant entered through one of the windows, which he forced open. Then he must have crossed directly to where she was sitting and repeated the

assault he had made on Hemenway, namely, he struck her on the head and knocked her unconscious. She did not recover until Hemenway returned at a late hour and found her. He immediately sent for a doctor, who cared for her, and then, when she had regained consciousness, he telephoned for me.

"I rushed at once to the house, but she was unable to tell me anything other than the bits of information which I have given you. I searched the room for clues and found one, a repetition of that in Hemenway's office. The difference in this case, however, was in the fact that the thumb print was clearly defined on the face of a small mirror which lay on the table, and the print was identical with that on the door of Hemenway's office. Therefore we can be certain that these assaults were committed by the same person, but aside from that there is no other clue. We cannot even discover a motive, as in neither case was anything taken, which plainly indicates that robbery was not the intention. Neither have they, so far as either knows, an enemy who would wish to put them out of the way. Furthermore, it does not seem that the assailant intended to kill them, for on both occasions he was careful to strike only a stunning blow, and one that would not result in death. That takes away the possibility of murder as the reason

for the assaults, besides which is the apparent absence of any motive for a murder. There you have the case, Sawyer, and the stories of the two assaults which are connected with it. Will you take hold of it with me?" He stared at Quincy anxiously as he finished.

"I certainly shall take hold of it," Quincy replied heartily. "It strikes me that you have unearthed a case of unusual interest."

"You'll think it has interest when you undertake to unravel it," Gates responded grimly.

"All right; but we shall try," Quincy laughed. "Now let us go up to the Back Bay residence and make our start there before the trail gets too old. We can take in Hemenway's office later, if it becomes necessary."

The Back Bay residence of Mrs. Patterson differed only in minor details from the residences which surround it on every hand. It was a plain, brick house with a disguised areaway at one side and with the usual flight of stone steps leading up to the front door. Ascending these steps, Quincy and Gates were admitted by the elderly serving woman and were shown at once to the little sitting-room where the assault of the preceding evening had occurred. Nobody was in the room at the time, and, while Gates pointed out the several points of interest, and indicated the spot occupied by Mrs. Patterson when

she was struck down, Quincy examined the room and its contents. After searching the room, Quincy walked across to the large window and peered down into the areaway just beneath him, raising the window and examining the woodwork at the end of his scrutiny.

"Humph!" he muttered. "An old-fashioned window-catch of no value whatever as a lock. Slid back when a knife blade was pressed against it. You can see, Gates, where the knife scarred the wood."

Apparently deciding that nothing of value was to be gained at the window, he next crossed to the table, where he stood for a long time looking down at the thumb print still plainly visible on the glass of the small mirror.

"Has this mirror been moved, Gates?" he inquired.

"Yes, I was obliged to move it when I photographed the thumb print, but I marked the spot where it lay and replaced it exactly."

For a moment Quincy was silent, but at last he remarked in a voice that seemed half speculative and half questioning: "I wonder, Gates, what logical reason a man could have had for touching that mirror in the first place. It lies so far in on the table that he wouldn't be likely to have leaned on it by accident, but yet he must have touched it in some way. What do you suppose he wished to see?"

Gates shook his head silently. "I am sure I don't understand," he replied. "It seems all a piece with the other points of the affair. What logical reason could he have had for knocking the old lady on the head, so far as logic is concerned?"

Quincy remained thoughtful for a few moments. "Will Mrs. Patterson be able to see us this morning?" he then inquired.

"I think so. She's pretty plucky and she'll be ready to give us every point of information she has if she can talk at all. She was too dazed to talk much last night, but I don't think that she is seriously injured. I'll call the servant and inquire."

He pressed the button and they waited in silence; but, when the door was finally pushed open, it was not the servant who appeared before them. Quincy saw framed in the doorway a young man whose cool eyes flashed sharply over them, and whose appearance gave every indication of ready resourcefulness and unhesitating action. Gates greeted the man in friendly fashion and turned toward Quincy.

"Mr. Hemenway, Sawyer," he said. "It is probable that he will be able to answer our questions."

"No," Hemenway replied briefly. "My grandmother wishes to talk to you herself. She is sitting up and has nearly recovered from her blow. She wishes me to conduct you up-stairs."

Without further words he faced about and ascended the gracefully curving stairway, Quincy and Gates following at his heels. At the head of the stairs he turned and conducted them along the corridor to an open door, where he stood aside and signed them to precede him. Within the room Quincy found himself facing a smiling old lady who sat propped up in an easy chair, amid pillows and cushions, staring at him with sharp, twinkling eyes. Aside from a small bandage which encircled her head, she gave no sign of the adventure she had so recently experienced and seemed, in all, but little the worse for the attack.

"Isn't she plucky?" Gates whispered admiringly. "Do you wonder I'm so anxious to catch the man who struck her?"

Quincy nodded briefly, and glanced up at the sound of the woman's voice.

"Have you gentlemen been able to formulate any reason for the unpleasant attentions which have been shown to my grandson and myself?" she inquired in a voice which Quincy noted to be as clear as her eyes.

"Not yet," he replied with gentle respect; "but we hope to do so soon. If you and Mr. Hemenway will tell us everything you can about the affair it may help us to solve the problem more readily."

"I can tell you little," Mrs. Patterson replied

with an emphasizing nod of her head. "I heard nothing and saw nothing. All I know is that I was struck from behind and was unconscious until I opened my eyes and found Fred bending over me."

"You were struck from behind!" Quincy ejaculated. "You are sure of that?"

"Positive, sir." Another nod of the head accompanied the statement.

"And how were you sitting? Were you facing the table or turned sideways to it?"

"I was facing the table. I always sit that way when I read because the drop lamp is so high it reflects better on my book than when I am turned from it. Fred says I should turn my back to it as he does, but you will notice that he wears glasses while I don't," she concluded with a merry little laugh.

Quincy smiled silently, but seemed satisfied with the result of his questioning, for he turned at once to Hemenway.

"Are you able to recall the facts preceding the blow which rendered you unconscious?" he inquired.

"Nothing of value," was the immediate reply. "Like my grandmother I neither heard nor saw anything, for I was too much occupied with my work to think of aught else."

"May I inquire what you were working on?"

The man hesitated for a moment, but at last re-

sponded: "Certainly, although I hardly see how it can have any bearing on the case. I am involved in a most important law case which has been in litigation for more than a year and which is now coming up for settlement within a week. The case involves some real estate which is at present my property, and which is claimed by a corporation which has been formed for the purpose of booming certain land of which mine is the keystone. Without it their company is worthless. I am frank to say that there is some foundation for their claims, although I think that by every degree of right the land belongs to me. I was at work over titles and maps in connection with it at the time when I was assaulted. So deeply was I interested in the work that I hardly think I would have noted an earthquake."

"There is nothing about those papers that would tempt the other side of this case to steal them, is there?" Quincy inquired sharply.

"No, not a thing. They possess duplicates of the very papers I was working over and would not have been in the least interested in the possession of mine. Furthermore, even had the company desired to secure my papers, of what advantage would it have been to them to assault my grandmother in the manner you have noted? She had no papers, nor information, concerning the matter. And, above

all, had it been the agent of that company who committed these attacks, he would have had a definite purpose in view, such as the stealing of the papers, and I am certain that not a single thing is missing, either here or at my office. No, gentlemen, we must look in some other direction for the assailant. That, to me, is very evident."

"What is the name of that real estate company, Mr. Hemenway?" Quincy asked.

"The Lorillard Realty Corporation," Hemenway replied. "Peter Lorillard is its president and principal stockholder. But, as I said, you may rest assured that they had nothing to gain by such methods as these."

"Yes, yes, I understand," Quincy remarked impatiently. "I wish, however, to get hold of every possible clue in connection with this affair. You have no enemies who would be likely to use such methods as have been employed?"

"None, so far as I know. Had the affair ended with the assault on me at the office I should undoubtedly have set it down to an attack by possible enemies, or to an assault with robbery for a motive, thinking that the man might in some way have been frightened away before having time in which to complete the robbery. This second assault, however, seems to do away with that possibility. These things cannot be the result of a coincidence, gentle-

men. They must be in some way connected, although in what way I am free to confess I do not know."

"You are still at work on your law case?"

"Oh, yes. It is very important, and I cannot neglect it, even with such occurrences as these taking place."

Quincy had nothing to say for a few moments; but was evidently thinking deeply. "I believe," he remarked at last, "that I must once more examine the sitting-room. Will you accompany me, Mr. Hemenway?"

Hemenway readily assented, and was half-way to the door before the voice of his grandmother arrested him. "Wait a moment, Fred," she called. "I want to go, too. I want to watch all that is going on," she added with a smile.

Hemenway instantly stopped and, returning, put his grandmother's arm through his and conducted her toward the stairway, the others following behind. When the old lady had been comfortably seated, the investigation of the room was renewed.

Quincy walked at once to the window, which he again examined with great care. "Gates," he said at last, "come here a moment. I want a snapshot of the thumb print on this window."

Gates strode across the room with interest writ-

ten large on his face. "That isn't the same thumb print!" he exclaimed, after a momentary glance.

"That's why I want a photograph of it," Quincy blandly answered him.

Gates seemed unsatisfied with the remark and the lack of information it contained, but he readily recognized the importance of Quincy's discovery, and at once busied himself with his camera. He carefully dusted the pane about the print and made two exposures, turning questioningly to Quincy when he had finished.

"Now," Quincy said, "I want your camera for a few minutes."

The camera was at once handed to him, and with it he retraced his steps to the table, where he minutely studied the small mirror.

"When you photographed that thumb print, Gates, by what part did you hold the mirror?" he asked.

"By the very tip end of the handle." Gates was plainly on pins and needles through curiosity at the turn events were taking, but he asked no questions.

Quincy rested the mirror against a pile of books and busied himself in front of it for several minutes. He first tried the light from one direction, and then from another, all the time whistling softly under his breath. At the end of fifteen minutes the fruit of

his efforts consisted of three exposures with the camera and several badly puzzled companions, but the companions were destined to remain in their puzzled state.

"Now, Gates," he remarked, with a satisfied smile as he carefully replaced the mirror and returned the camera, "I think we have discovered very nearly all that is to be found here. We must now go where we may be able to run across other clues. Perhaps, Mr. Hemenway, we shall call at your office later in the day, but that is a decided uncertainty."

He courteously took leave of Mrs. Patterson, jerked his head imperatively at Gates, and quietly followed Hemenway toward the front door. His first step, when once outside the house, was to push open the gate of the areaway and to stare speculatively up at the window of the room from which they had just come.

"The man who forced that lock and climbed through the window must have been decidedly active, Gates," he remarked, still measuring the distance with his eye. "It would require considerable skill to climb up that waterspout and then to crawl out along the ledge; and yet that, I think, must have been the mode of entrance employed. Well, come on, we have work elsewhere," and he faced sharply about, leaving the question of the mode of entrance for future consideration.

"Now, Gates," Quincy continued, after a protracted spell of silence, "I don't think that we shall be able to do much actual work before evening. I have a few minor matters which I wish to consider, but that portion of the work I can best do alone. Do you know Tim McMahon's saloon over in the West End?"

"Sure," Gates responded, fresh interest showing in his face. "I was on that beat a year, and got my first experience as a cop over there. But what about Tim?"

"Oh, there is nothing in particular that I wish to say about Tim, it is his saloon that I am interested in. Would they know you over there if you should show up?"

"Tim would, but he's pretty straight himself, no matter what his patrons may be. He'd keep quiet if I tipped him the wink."

"Good. I want you to meet me there at eight o'clock tonight. Go into Tim's back room and, if I am not there, wait for me."

Gates grinned. "Say," he remarked, "you seem to be tolerably familiar with that place."

"It was one of my sociology laboratories," Quincy assured him. "Tim and I are old cronies."

"I suppose," Gates continued, after a short pause, "that you know what you are doing, but I'll swear

that it gets past me. Are you on a particular trail, or are you trusting to luck?"

"I am following a definite path," Quincy assured him. "Meet me at Tim's according to instructions and you may see something interesting. Oh, before we separate for the day, I want one more thing from you. Lend me your thumb a minute."

As Gates wonderingly complied, Quincy carefully inked the thumb with a fountain pen and made an impression of the print on the back of an old envelope. He then made an impression of his own thumb, carefully examined both to make certain that they were perfect, and placed the envelope in an inner pocket. Next, with Gates' permission, he removed the film from the inspector's camera and, pocketing it, together with photographic copies of the two thumb prints appearing in the case, he bade the inspector a smiling farewell and disappeared in the direction of his own office.

He did not at once return to his office, however, but made his way to a small sporting goods shop which made a specialty of developing plates and films for amateur photographers. There he perched on a counter for a long time, while his own films were being developed and printed. With the prints at last in his possession, he retired into his office and there spent several hours studying and comparing the various thumb prints in the small collection.

At times he scowled fiercely, as though the matter were not untangling to his complete satisfaction; but again and again a silent smile broke through the scowl, and when at last he rose from his hours of study it was with the air of one who had at least partially solved a knotty problem. He stretched himself with many grunts and strainings of his muscles, yawned wearily and stared out of his window at the buildings in the vicinity. He finally reached for his hat, but even as his fingers touched its brim, he was halted by the ringing of the telephone bell. Picking up the 'phone he called lazily into it.

"Hello. This you, Sawyer?" came an excited voice from the other end of the wire. "Say, this is Gates talking. The fat's kicked over for fair and the deuce is to pay. Hemenway has been kidnapped or spirited away somewhere!"

"Kidnapped! Nonsense!" Quincy exclaimed. "It isn't possible to kidnap a grown man right in broad daylight in a city the size of this."

"But it's been done, I tell you," Gates persisted. "The old lady just called me up to tell me about it. It seems the door bell rang a short time ago and he answered the bell. When he didn't come back for a long time she sent the servant to find out what was keeping him, as she's naturally a little nervous. The servant found the front door open,

but there was no sign of Hemenway anywhere. He had disappeared completely."

"He stepped out somewhere with whoever wanted to see him," Quincy suggested.

"Stepped out nothing! His hat hangs where he left it last night, and he didn't even have a coat on. He wouldn't be stepping out in his shirt-sleeves if he intended to be gone long. The old lady waited half an hour more for him to show up and then, when he didn't come, she had the servant make inquiries. A fellow in the next house said that he had seen a closed carriage drive up to Hemenway's door and saw two men get out of it. He didn't pay any particular attention to them, and didn't notice the carriage again, until just as it was driving away. Then, he says, he caught a glimpse of a fellow without a coat in the carriage and that one of the others seemed to be holding his hand over that man's mouth. That don't look as though he went away of his own accord, does it?"

Quincy gave a low whistle at the news and stood for several seconds uncertainly tapping on the 'phone. Then his air of assurance returned and he replied sharply: "Never mind about this, Gates; you carry out our former program and meet me at Tim McMahon's tonight. I'm going out to look for Hemenway, but the chances are against my finding him this afternoon, even though I think I know

what has become of him. You can safely tell the old lady that no harm will come to him, but beyond that I can't say anything yet. Be sure and meet me at Tim's."

The receiver clicked back on the hook, and Quincy whirled quickly toward a spacious closet at one side of his office.

Late in the afternoon a disreputable-appearing tatterdemalion slouched into one of the most notorious dives in the West End. The man, after a quick glance about the room, timidly approached the bar; but the forbidding frown of the bartender seemed to alter his purpose, for he turned abruptly and sank into a chair near one of the billiard tables. A game was in progress, and for many minutes his heavy-lidded eyes disinterestedly followed the success of one after another of the players. Nobody paid particular notice to him and he returned the courtesy, his eyes being fixed on the balls rather than on the players. At last, however, the clerk in charge of the tables approached in a leisurely fashion and the eyes of the loafer gleamed momentarily with sudden interest.

"Rabbit," he whispered softly, as the young clerk stood before him.

At the sound of the name the man turned sharply and stared with open suspicion. "Well, what do youse want?" he demanded, approaching slowly.

The man indicated a chair at his side. "Sit down a minute," he invited.

Rabbit somewhat reluctantly complied, still keeping his eyes fixed suspiciously on his companion. "Say, look a-here," he growled, "I ain't settin' up no drinks today. Get that into your bean."

A shade of amusement crossed the ragged man's face and, with a look of silent warning, he pushed back his hat, revealing his whole face for a moment before returning the hat to its original position.

"Mr. Sawyer!" Rabbit gasped in amazement. "I ain't seen youse since you was in college and I was a pin boy down to O'Neil's. Say, are youse down and out?" he asked with ready sympathy, correcting himself almost immediately. "Oh, I know. They tells me youse is a fly one now." He asked no questions, apparently divining the fact that his part was to answer and not to interrogate.

"Seen Long Tom lately?" Quincy inquired in a low voice, after an interval of silence.

"So it's him, is it?" Rabbit muttered in a voice equally low. "Say, this won't be gettin' me into trouble, will it?"

"No, you're safe enough," Quincy assured him. "You won't be snitching because Tom isn't hiding out yet."

"That's so, too," Rabbit remarked thoughtfully.

"Well, him and Ike McKechnie was in here this mornin'. I ain't seen 'em since. What's their job?"

"So Ike's in it, is he?" Quincy soliloquized. "I suspected as much. I'm not dead sure of their job, Rabbit, but I have a very good idea. But, remember this. If I don't tell you that they're wanted, nor why, they can't blame you for what may happen to them. Have they been around here often of late?"

"I ain't seen 'em before for two weeks. I guess they've been hangin' out down to O'Neil's or over to Tim McMahon's. They've both been havin' lots of the ready lately, and I guess this joint got too cheap for 'em."

"What did they do in here this morning? Drink or talk business?"

"Talked business, I guess. They was over at one of the tables a long time punishin' a pint or two of booze. I didn't go near 'em because I never had no use for Long Tom, and Ike never had no use for me. They didn't look like they wanted company, anyhow."

Quincy's hand disappeared into the breast of his ragged coat. When it once more became visible a bill peeped from between two of his fingers, and on the corner of the bill was plainly to be seen a figure five. Rabbit's eyes shone hungrily as they rested on

the bill, and his face took on an added look of interest.

"That's yours," Quincy informed him, "if you will find out for certain whether or not Ike and Tom have hired any rooms up-stairs, and, if so, for how long."

Rabbit's long limbs were endowed with all the speed of the animal which had lent him its name, but he was too wise to exhibit his speed at the present moment and, in that way, arouse suspicion by too great haste. He arose in leisurely fashion and sauntered carelessly about the room, gradually drawing nearer to the bar. At length, he reached his goal and, leaning lazily across it, carelessly addressed a short sentence to the bartender. He talked in low tones with that worthy individual for some time before again taking up his circuitous route among the tables. At length he again sank into the chair at Quincy's side.

"They've got one room," he whispered through the corner of his mouth, his head all the while turned in the opposite direction. "It's hired for a week. They've got a friend in it now, but the bartender wouldn't tell me when he came, and says he don't know who the guy is."

"Good," Quincy whispered, as the money surreptitiously changed hands. "Keep your eyes open and there may be another fiver coming to you later on."

Rabbit again drifted out among the tables, while Quincy resumed his attitude of bleary somnolence. Finally he, too, arose unsteadily and approached the bar. With many sage shakes of his head, and numerous low-voiced comments to the forbidding bartender, he searched through all his pockets until, with almost superhuman endeavour, he had accumulated the sum of ten cents. He laid the money on the bar, poured out a glass of the vile whisky and then, when the bartender turned to replace the bottle, dumped the contents of the glass on the floor. That accomplished, he made his way out of the place ostentatiously wiping his lips and giving every indication of satisfied thirst.

Once outside, he turned sharply from the back street on which the saloon was located and hastily made his way to the nearest corner. There he boarded a car and was whirled away to the centre of the city, where, once again in his office, he removed his ragged clothes and resumed his normal appearance.

"Let me see," he muttered thoughtfully, as he dropped into a chair. "I wonder what Ike has been up to of late years. I've somewhat lost track of him since I've been away." He picked up a city directory and hastily scanned its pages. "Yes, here we find him. Jeremiah McKechnie, attorney-at-law. So he hasn't been debarred at any rate and,

judging from the location of his office, he must be doing very well financially. He has brains, certainly, or he would never have emerged from his existence as a keeper of a pawn-shop, during which previous period, I suppose, he accumulated the name 'Ike.'" He paused thoughtfully for a time, and then turned to a business gazetteer of the city, a page of which seemed to hold his attention for a long period. At last he arose and shook his shoulders impatiently, glancing at his watch and then out into the deepening twilight. "Well," he muttered, "everything is now ready and the stage is set. It is only necessary to await the raising of the curtain."

He walked at a leisurely pace out of his office and to the nearest restaurant where he seated himself for a comfortable meal. The waiter bowed cordially, for Quincy, both during and since his college days, had made friends with men in all walks of life, a fact which was of ever increasing value to him in his present profession.

"Saw an old friend of yours in here today, Mr. Sawyer," the waiter informed him while busily laying the table. "Leastwise he was an old acquaintance, but perhaps you wouldn't call him a friend."

"Who was it?" Quincy inquired with an interested smile.

"Ike McKechnie. He was in here for lunch. Ike seems to be getting quite up in the world of late," the waiter concluded, as he hurried away with Quincy's order.

At the information Quincy smiled broadly. Unconsciously he seemed to have been trailing Ike McKechnie all day and very closely, a fact which was of much interest to him.

"Was Ike alone?" he inquired, when the waiter had returned.

"No," was the reply. "He had some stout old gent with him and they seemed to be on extra good terms from the way they talked and laughed. The old gent looked like ready money and heaps of it, too."

Quincy made no further inquiries nor comments on the subject, devoting himself soberly to his meal. This piece of information added nothing to the structure of evidence he had erected, but it served to a marked degree to substantiate his theories and to make him more certain than ever that he was on the right track. He then dismissed the entire matter from his mind while he finished his dinner and, when at last he arose and sauntered out, carelessly puffing a cigar, an observer would have thought him the last person to be intimately connected with a deep and complicated problem.

Tim McMahon's saloon blazed with light as

Quincy strolled nonchalantly in at the appointed hour. The saloon was of a somewhat better class than its neighbours and catered to a trade with greater resources than might be discovered in the ordinary West End saloon patron. Ward politicians, small grafters and the general run of municipal hangers-on made the place their headquarters, and to it, for that reason, practically every member of the ward's political representation made his way at one time or another during the year. Minor plots against the city's treasury were laid there almost nightly, and it was a poor week indeed when a small portion of that same treasury did not, by means of some subtle pretext, find its way into Tim's coffers. Gambling was allowed "on the quiet," but rows of any sort were strictly prohibited, for Tim was exceedingly jealous of his saloon's reputation and, as the result, the man who "started anything" was in grave danger of being immediately propelled to the middle of the sidewalk with forceful energy.

As Quincy picked his way through the small crowd, the genial face of Tim himself appeared from around the lower corner of the bar. Seeing Quincy he advanced with outstretched hand and ready smile, in memory of Quincy's "laboratory days," many of which had been spent within those walls while the young man absorbed, from his sur

roundings, lore of political forays and gained a speaking acquaintance with every notorious character in the district. Tim jerked his head in the direction of the back room as his hand met Quincy's in friendly clasp.

"Gates is in there," he growled in his thick, rumbling voice. "Say, what's up, anyhow?" he continued anxiously. "You fellows ain't going to start trouble in my place, are you?"

"Not unless the trouble starts on the other side and you refuse to back us, Tim," Quincy assured him with a meaning glance. "We're after two of your best customers, but they are to blame, because they've used your back room as a meeting-place where they've planned crooked work that's outside the regular." To Tim and his confreres any plot against the city as a whole was "the regular" and was allowed, but plots against individuals were firmly tabooed.

Tim's eyes gleamed angrily. "They're trying to put my place in bad with the bulls, are they?" he growled in a voice indicative of rising wrath.

"They are in a fair way to do so," Quincy assured him; "but, if you will give us your backing when we need it, the bulls will have nothing to do with this case, with the exception of Gates, and he's a friend of yours. They'll yell blue murder, Tim, when we land on them; but we have the

goods and we can prove it to you before we're through."

"I'll take your word for it, Sawyer," Tim answered, "especially if you'll show me the goods afterward. Now, who are the men and what do you want me to do?"

"The men," Quincy answered slowly, "are Ike McKechnie and Long Tom." Tim whistled, but said nothing. "When they come in I want you to tip us off. We'll get them into one of the private rooms and then we'll ring for drinks. When we do that you are to answer the bell yourself and then we'll tell you what else to do. Has anyone spoken for Room Eight? No? All right, then. We'll take them to Room Eight, and, if you do your part, you'll have no trouble over this, and you'll get your place free of a pretty pair of crooks."

Tim nodded emphatic agreement with the plan and Quincy left him, making his way into the back room where Gates was impatiently waiting. Gates glanced up questioningly as Quincy approached. "Everything going well?" he inquired.

"Excellently," Quincy assured him, dropping into a chair on the opposite side of the table. "Our men will undoubtedly put in an appearance here later on in the evening."

Gates raised his eyebrows. "Our men?" he repeated.

Quincy nodded. "Gates, do you know Ike McKechnie and Long Tom?"

Gates shook his head negatively after several moments of careful reflection. "I don't remember ever having heard of either of them," he said.

"So much the better. They know me, which is bad; but I think that we shall have little trouble in overcoming that difficulty. Tim will tip us off when they appear outside and I can point them out to you when they come in here, as they are certain to do. Now, the idea is this. I am drunk, hopelessly drunk, and we want to play poker. The chances are strong that they'll remember me as easy money, and they'll be ready enough to play, provided their suspicions are not aroused. If their suspicions do become aroused, they'll agree to play anyway because they won't dare do anything else. Your job is to round them up and get them interested. Then we will all go to Room Eight, — don't forget that number, — and, when we are once there, I imagine that developments will follow each other very rapidly. You have the plan correctly?"

Gates nodded quietly and Quincy sank back in an excellent assumption of a drunken stupor.

For perhaps half an hour they remained in their positions, silent save for the occasional maudlin remarks from Quincy, thrown out from time to time for the benefit of the various patrons of the

saloon with which the place was filling. At last Tim's face appeared in the doorway, and his glance flashed quickly over the assemblage until it rested on Gates. He nodded meaningly and then stared in anxious astonishment at Quincy, but a cautious wink from Gates reassured him and his head disappeared. Hardly had the door closed after him before it reopened to admit the eagerly awaited pair, Long Tom and Lawyer Ike McKechnie.

Gates sized them up as they advanced, and mentally classified each before they had reached the middle of the room. In McKechnie he saw a man whom nature had evidently intended to be slim, but who had so far improved on nature's designs as to become remarkably fat and florid as to features, although his body still maintained its original gangling formation. His face was filled with egotistical pomposity and the condescending manner with which he addressed his companion from time to time showed beyond doubt that, in his own mind, at least, Lawyer McKechnie was a figure to be reckoned with. Long Tom, on the other hand, outwardly possessed neither egotism nor self-assertion. An exceptionally tall man, and one whose extreme slimness made his height seem even greater, he carried with him an air of furtiveness and foxlike cunning that would be sufficient at first glance to arouse the suspicions of even the most trusting of

men. He appeared to rely on McKechnie as on a guide or commander, and implicitly obeyed every suggestion emanating from that worthy source.

As the men cast about them for a vacant table, Gates arose and nonchalantly approached them, both men halting, with eyes fixed questioningly and expectantly upon him as he came up with them.

"My friend and I," he said with a backward jerk of his thumb in Quincy's direction, "want a little game. We've engaged a room and have been waiting for someone to come in who looked as if he could play a gentleman's game. Are you in on it?"

McKechnie grinned uncertainly and shifted his position slightly so as to obtain a better view of Quincy. "For the love of Mike!" he exclaimed, as his eye fell on the silent figure at the table. "It's young Sawyer and as full as a goat." He fixed his eyes speculatively on Gates. "Sawyer used to carry a fair roll," he stated meditatively.

Gates caught the implied interrogation. "Believe me," he stated emphatically, "Sawyer's roll hasn't diminished any."

McKechnie grinned in secret anticipation. "We're on," he announced. "Where's your room?"

After much shaking and many protesting groans and growls Quincy was at last imbued with sufficient interest in his surroundings to climb to his feet and be led, leaning heavily on Gates, in the direction of Room Eight. Once there, Gates dropped him unceremoniously into the chair nearest the door and busied himself with preparations for the game. As he moved and talked, however, his watchful eyes were continuously roving in Quincy's direction, where they were at last rewarded by the sight of a sharp wink.

"Guess we'd better start right by having some drinks brought up, hadn't we?" he questioned, the invitation being met by fervent expressions of assent. In accordance with the evident desire of the company, therefore, he leaned over and pressed long on the button.

To the surprise of Long Tom and McKechnie it was Tim McMahon, himself, who answered the summons, and he further added to their surprise by carefully closing the door as he entered and placing his broad back against it.

"What'll you have?" was his husky greeting.

Surprises appeared to abound in that particular room, as Long Tom and McKechnie were about to discover, for, hardly had Tim's inquiry been made, before Quincy abruptly emerged from his lethargy and sat up, fixing his eyes on McKechnie's face.

Suspicion immediately appeared in that individual's eyes and his hands convulsively grasped the edge of the table.

"What kind of a plant is this?" he demanded savagely. "You fellows spring your game quick, whatever it is."

Quincy laughed softly and meaningly. "Our game, Ike?" he inquired. "You surprise me. Indeed you do." He half rose, and leaned across the table, as he continued, but the smile had disappeared from his face, leaving in its place a look of cold accusation. "We're playing no game, Ike McKechnie, as you are about to discover. I am superseding my friend, Inspector Gates, a trifle, but it will amount to the same thing in the end. Ike McKechnie, I arrest you in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on the charge of abduction and as being an accessory before the fact on a charge of murderous assault. Long Tom, I arrest you under the same authority on the charge of abduction and of assault with intent to kill, the latter charge containing two counts.

"And I," Gates broke in, "must warn you that whatever you say from this time forth may be used against you at your trial."

For a moment the pair stared dumbly in Quincy's direction, too stupefied to move or speak; but their state of paralysis lasted only momentarily.

With a vicious snarl McKechnie sprang from his chair straight on Gates, who, taken off his guard, fell heavily to the floor. Long Tom was no whit behind his pal in readiness and, as Quincy grappled with McKechnie, Tom plunged in behind, getting a strangle hold about Quincy's neck and bearing him to the floor. As Quincy fell McKechnie leaped back, drew a revolver and turned with a savage grunt of triumph toward McMahon. If he had thoughts of over-awing the saloon keeper by show of arms, however, he was doomed to bitter disappointment, for Tim, though slow of movement, could move like a cyclone when once he got under way.

As McKechnie's revolver whipped into view, Tim, moving with the irresistible force of a runaway express train, struck him, head-on, and the two rolled to the floor amid a chaos of splintered chairs and overturned furniture. As the crash of the fall sounded, and mingled with it came the grunts of McKechnie, groaning beneath Tim's massive bulk, Long Tom suddenly loosened his hold on Quincy and turned to flee. But he was too late. Gates, having regained his scattered wits during the few moments occupied by the short conflict, had taken up his position in the doorway, and Tom found himself staring into the barrel of a business-like revolver.

"TIM . . . STRUCK HIM, HEAD ON."

"Better quit it, Tom," Gates advised him quietly. "It's all over now."

Before Long Tom could make up his own mind as to his step, Gates' muscular arm had seized him and hurled him across the room into a chair, where he sank down cowed and silent. McKechnie followed, propelled by a vigorous thrust from Tim, and the fight for freedom ended almost as abruptly as it had begun.

"Look here, Tim," McKechnie snarled, at last regaining some of his self-control. "Are you going to stand for this? Are you going to let us be pinched on any such fool charge, and in your own place?"

"Ah, cheese!" was Tim's disgusted retort. "A healthy bunch of regard you're showin' for my place all of a sudden, ain't you? Do you think I'm goin' to butt in on the bulls and put my place to the everlastin' bad just for the likes of you? Not by a heap. This administration ain't none too friendly toward me as things is, and you can bet your bottom dollar that I ain't takin' chances. What'd you go to work and get my place mixed up in this for, anyway? That's what I want to know," he continued savagely.

McKechnie subsided, seemingly too overcome to speak, but not so with Long Tom. While the discussion had been in progress he had hitched him-

self about until he had secured an open passage between his chair and the window. With a leap he cleared the chair and covered half the distance to his desired goal, and another bound took him to the window itself. But he had not been sufficiently cautious in his original movements, for every furtive hitch of the chair had been noted by Quincy and, as Long Tom threw himself at the window ledge, he was sharply upset and hurled struggling to the floor, with Quincy astride him. Twist and squirm as he would, his arms were relentlessly borne back until two sharp metallic clicks informed him as plainly as words that further resistance would be useless. As he struggled to his feet his eyes fell on a small object which Quincy held in his hand, and, in spite of himself, he paled visibly at the sight. Quincy stood silently regarding the object, an expression of disgust on his face. Then, with a nauseated shrug, he dropped the object into his own pocket. As he looked up into Long Tom's shifting eyes, however, that individual shuddered violently and the light of hope appeared to have utterly vanished from his face.

"Handcuff Ike, Gates," came Quincy's curt command, and in a few moments McKechnie's wrists were adorned with rings of gleaming steel.

"Now," Quincy continued, "we have work elsewhere for the time being. I want to leave these men

here, Tim, until we come back." Tim nodded assent to the proposition and glared balefully at the prisoners. "You'll make certain they don't escape while we are gone?" Quincy continued.

"Oh, they won't escape," Tim affirmed grimly. "I'll sit right here myself, and keep 'em company until you get back. I want to know the rest of this tale."

"Say, Sawyer," Gates protested in an undertone, as they made their way out of the building. "Aren't we taking a long chance in arresting these men? Are you sure of your ground?"

"Absolutely," Quincy replied soberly. "I was sure of it from the first, but I caught Long Tom with the goods just now and there isn't a bit of doubt left. I lifted a little object from his pocket that will give you a start when you see it."

"Where are we headed for, anyhow?" Gates next asked as they dropped from a surface car at a dark corner in the West End.

"We are going after Hemenway," Quincy informed him. "And, by the way, Gates, you have not the least show in the world of passing muster where we are going. You look altogether too trim."

"But I can't work up any kind of a disguise now," Gates protested.

"Oh, yes, you can. A scientific disguise has

nothing to do with false whiskers and changed clothes, in spite of what the popular version of the subject may be. Here, let me show you how to go about it. First push that hat toward the back of your head; no, a little farther and a bit to one side. That's right. Next roll the right hand lapel of your coat over a little, so that the lapel and about half your collar will remain out of place. Correct. Then stick this in your other lapel." He put in place a cheap button bearing a pointless phrase printed on it, a button of the type sold with cigarettes. "Lastly, put this jewel in your tie." He extended a tie pin set with a large flashy gem.

"Gee," Gates muttered. "Is that sparkler the real thing?"

"The real thing in paste, yes. It will flash like fire when the light strikes it from the proper angle. Now take your face between those big paws of yours and rub it heartily so as to give you a flushed appearance, and if you don't pass anywhere as a low class tout I'm mistaken."

Quincy surveyed his handiwork as a makeup artist with a grin, and then made a few hasty changes in his own appearance, achieving a result which Gates greeted with a snort of derision.

"If I look like you do I'm ashamed of myself," Gates grinned as they moved off.

The saloon which Quincy had visited in the

afternoon maintained its same general appearance as they entered. The crowd of loungers and hangers-on was a little larger, perhaps; but the same sullen bartender stood at his place, Rabbit still circulated among the billiard tables, and the same furtive type of men slunk about the room, grunting at one another in subdued tones.

"Got a table vacant, Sport?" Quincy demanded in a loud tone of Rabbit, sinking his voice to a whisper as he fired a second question. "What room is Long Tom's friend in?"

"Naw, there ain't none vacant," Rabbit responded with a gleam of recognition in his eyes. "Up-stairs, first room to the right," he concluded in a whisper.

"Well," Quincy continued, "my friend and I want to play off a bet. Call us when there's a table vacant and there'll be something in it for you." A meaning glance accompanied the words, and as Quincy moved off Rabbit found another bill in his hand.

Going directly to the bar they called for drinks, and, the crowd about being too large to allow for their dispensing of the vile liquid by way of the floor, they were forced to drink it. "Rat poison," Quincy heard Gates disgustedly mutter as he set his glass on the bar. Quincy then addressed the bartender:

"My friend and I," he said, "want a room. Got one for us?"

The bartender eyed him critically and, appearing to detect nothing suspicious about either of the prospective guests, replied: "Yes. A dollar a night in advance."

Quincy produced the money, peeling it from a very slender roll, and the pair were conducted to the floor above by a seedy-looking bell boy. As the door of their room closed Quincy listened intently while the footfalls of the bell boy slowly receded down the corridor. When the sounds had died away he jerked open the door and was in the corridor, Gates striding briskly after him. They rushed silently to the door Rabbit had described, and Quincy turned the knob, finding, as he had expected, that the door was locked.

"Open it," he commanded tersely, and Gates was instantly at work with his skeleton keys. The lock was old fashioned and yielded quickly, allowing the pair to gain entrance after merely a momentary delay. The room was in darkness, but Quincy's flashlight quickly revealed the electric switch, and the lights immediately flashed forth.

There on the bed lay Hemenway, securely bound and gagged.

Working rapidly, it was but a few moments before they had untied the various knots and Hemen-

way sat slowly up, gingerly stretching his arms to allow for the returning circulation.

"They kidnapped me," he sputtered, as soon as he was able to speak. "They enticed me into a cab and brought me here. I've been tied up ever since."

"Why didn't you yell or raise a rough house to attract attention?" Gates demanded.

"Yell!" Hemenway snorted. "I couldn't yell. One of them had a grip on my neck, and I had my hands full trying to keep him from choking me to death. I thought at first that killing me was their intention, and I fought like a cat to get away from them. I bit, clawed, struck, kicked and did everything a man could do, but I couldn't break that hold on my throat and, fighting against two of them as I was, it didn't take a great while before I was too exhausted to keep up the struggle. When I stopped fighting they loosened up on me a little and I had a chance to get my breath while they were driving to this place. I couldn't attract any outside attention, though, because they pulled the curtains down and one of them had his hand on me ready to grab me by the throat again if I made the least movement.

"When we got to this place they drove in by means of some back alley, and there was another blackguard waiting for them at the door. He was

a bartender, I should think, and the three of them dragged me out of the hack. I broke away from them somewhat, and got down in the street on my back, and, believe me, there were some sore shins in that crowd before they could get me up again. I kicked and howled and raised all kinds of a ruction, but it was no use. I couldn't seem to attract any attention at all and, as soon as I tired myself out again, they dragged me up here and tied me up. I've been tied up just as you found me ever since. That bartender has been up every once in a while, since, to make sure that I wasn't getting the ropes loose, but I haven't seen anything of the other pair."

"Would you know the other men?" Quincy questioned.

"You bet I would," Hemenway replied with savage conviction. "I'd know them anywhere. And, if I ever do meet them again —" The pause which followed the remark was filled with significant promise.

"Come," Quincy stated. "We can't waste time here. It would be dangerous."

Even as he spoke, footsteps sounded at the foot of the stairs, followed almost immediately by Rabbit's bawling summons: "Say, you gents. There's a table vacant now."

For a moment silence reigned, and then the three

in the doorway heard a fierce sibilant whisper from half way up the stairs. "You fool, what did you do that for?"

"They told me to," Rabbit whined in protest. "They told me to holler when there was a table."

"Come," said Gates in a low growl. "The longer we wait the harder our job will be."

He leaped through the door, with the others close at his heels. Down the flight of stairs they charged and, before the bartender, for it was he, had time in which to recover himself, a blow from Gates' mighty fist sent him flying out of the way, reeling and staggering against the wall. From the direction of the saloon came the alarmed cry of "cops," followed by the scurrying of many feet. In their path stood the Rabbit, cleverly simulating silent terror; but, as the trio bounded his way, one eye closed slowly and a quick jerk of his thumb indicated a doorway.

The slight delay in getting their bearings was sufficient to complicate their escape. The bartender had regained his feet and, thirsting for vengeance, came at them with a yell, calling all the while for the aid of his friends in the saloon. Gates leaped forward to meet him, but found quickly that he had his hands full, for the bartender showed himself to be a skilled boxer, undoubtedly a product of the prize ring. His first blow sent Gates back, dazed

and half falling, and, without pausing an instant, he followed up his advantage to such good purpose that Gates became fully occupied in trying to parry the blows, without being given an opportunity to strike in his own behalf.

To make matters worse there came a rush of feet from the direction of the saloon and it was evident to the detectives and Hemenway that it would be but a matter of a few seconds before they were set upon by overwhelming numbers. Again, however, it was the Rabbit who came to their rescue. With a shrill squeal of assumed terror he turned about and dived headlong through the door, striking among the advancing legs and so entangling them that in an instant the doorway was choked with a heap of struggling human beings, all striving to regain their feet and advance to the attack.

But, the slight delay caused by Rabbit's manœuvre had been sufficient to once more turn the tide, for the bartender, suddenly beset on either side by Quincy and Hemenway, while Gates occupied him from in front, found himself to be greatly at a disadvantage. His arms were simultaneously pinioned to his sides and then, with a sudden heave by the three men in unison, he was propelled headlong into the struggling mass that choked the doorway. Their way once more free from obstruction, the trio

sprang toward the door which the Rabbit had indicated and plunged through it, finding themselves in a narrow alley, at one end of which gleamed the lights of a street, and from which end came the dull clanging of street car gongs. A short run carried them the length of the alley and, having gained the street, it was but a few moments before they were aboard a surface car and bound in the direction of Tim McMahon's saloon.

The status of affairs in Room Eight appeared to have changed not at all during their absence. McKechnie and Long Tom still sat where they had been left, staring gloomily at each other, while Tim slouched back in a chair and puffed at his stubby clay pipe in grim silence. Such was the sight which met Hemenway's gaze as he entered, but the silent inactivity of the place was of short duration following his entrance. As his eyes fell on the prisoners he grasped sharply at Quincy's arm.

"Those are the men," he exclaimed excitedly. "They are the ones who were in that cab."

"I know it," Quincy assured him quietly. "We are now about to call their game and the result will be interesting."

While the brief colloquy was going on Gates had been sharply scanning Long Tom's face, noting the various shades of pallor that were intermittently appearing on it, and watching the expression of fear

grow ever stronger as the man's imagination became active.

"Look at Long Tom," he whispered to Quincy. "It will need only the mildest of examinations to twist a confession from him."

"We don't need it," Quincy replied. "We have the goods on them both, and they can't shake away under any consideration. Now, Mr. Hemenway," he continued, turning half about, "I am able to introduce you to the man who assaulted you in your office, and then followed it up by an assault on your grandmother in her own home. You are proud of your work, aren't you, Tom? It takes a man of unusual courage to sneak up behind an old lady and hit her over the head."

"But, why?" Hemenway gasped, looking from Quincy to Long Tom, and evidently struggling in a fog of mystification. "Why should he have done it? I am sure I never saw the man before, and, for the life of me, I cannot see what enmity he could have toward my grandmother and myself."

"He had none, Hemenway. I assure you that he had none whatever. This little game was a stroke in a certain class of high finance. Our collection," indicating the prisoners, "is still short one curio, but that need make no difference at present. You will best be able to understand the affair if I give

you a more detailed account of it, and the reasons causing it, as I have figured them out.

"My starting point, Mr. Hemenway, was here. It was perfectly evident, from the mode employed in the assaults on yourself and on your grandmother, that whoever committed the deeds had no intention of doing either of you a lasting injury. The blows dealt in each case were too light to cause death, being merely what are called in police parlance 'sleepers,' or stunning blows. They were struck, I judged, with a sandbag, and by the hand of a man well versed in the art of sandbagging. If the blows were not intended to cause death, or serious injury, their motive could not, therefore, have been revenge. The robbery theory passed out of the case hand-in-hand with the theory of enmity, or revenge, because in each case you testified that nothing whatever had been taken. Consequently, I was obliged to seek elsewhere for a motive, and it was not until you told me of the pending law settlement of your contested property rights that I commenced to see a glimmer of light in the case.

"I seized on that theory and worked at it, finding that it quickly unfolded a most plausible motive for the assaults; namely, that the man who was contesting your rights was preparing to spring some sort of a trap, and that he wished to keep your attention engaged elsewhere while he was working

out his little game. Nothing will focus a man's attention more readily, as a rule, than an assault on him, and you were therefore attacked. But, even then, you did not relax your efforts in the preparation of your property case, and it became necessary for your opponent to take another step, the result being the attack on your grandmother. But, even then, your opponent evidently was not fully satisfied, for we have seen that you were kidnapped and carried to the place where we found you, — your room, let me add, having been hired for a week, which argues that you were doomed to confinement until after the case had come to trial. There, I think, we have the motive of this affair."

"But," Hemenway protested; "would they have dared to kidnap me for any such reason as that? I saw the two men and would have been able to identify them at any time."

"Yes," Quincy replied with a smile. "You could have identified them to your own satisfaction; but you have no idea what beautiful alibis they would have been provided with, had you brought your charge against them. The chances are strong that, instead of having your case against them upheld, the only result of your charge would have been that you would have found yourself ordered out of court and have been reprimanded for bringing in charges so evidently the result of your

own drunken imagination. Yes, that is what your charge would have been called, so don't look shocked. These men would have been supplied with an endless chain of witnesses who would have corroborated whatever alibi the defence happened to choose. You can see how little risk they ran in abducting you. Remember, also, that they are backed by Peter Lorillard, of the Lorillard Realty Corporation, and that Mr. McKechnie is that corporation's chief counsel. There you have the whole affair in a nutshell."

"But, Sawyer," Gates broke in. "All that is interesting and necessary, but how did you settle on Long Tom? That is what I want to find out."

"Well," Quincy continued, "that part was the result of deduction. I have shown how I traced the affair to Lorillard's company and how McKechnie is the company's counsel. I have also shown that I believed both victims to have been sandbagged. Now, a sandbag is a weapon that requires great skill in its use. It leaves no mark when a blow is struck with it, it is silent, and above all it is deadly. In the hands of an inexperienced man a sandbag is one of the most dangerous of weapons; but an expert can so judge the force of his blow as to make it as wicked or as harmless as he pleases. You must observe that nobody other than an expert could have struck the blows in this particular case, for

you will readily see that it required a far different blow to strike down a young man than was required to incapacitate an aged woman. Had the same blows been used the inevitable result would have been death for Mrs. Patterson. Therefore I discovered that I must search for a sandbag expert.

"Strange as it may seem, sandbag experts are very few and far between in this city, for the sandbag, as Inspector Gates will tell you, is rarely used here. In fact, as I ran back over the list of my variously accomplished acquaintances, I could think of only one man whom I absolutely knew to be a sandbag expert. That man was Long Tom, who learned the art in Chicago, I believe, several years ago. Long Tom, also, was a close pal of Ike McKechnie, which fact formed a second link connecting him with the case. From time to time, as I followed out the thread of evidence, I found other connections which strengthened my belief. Now, Gates, before I continue my story, will you please take Tom's thumb print and compare it with the photographs of the prints figuring in this case. Compare it carefully with the one in Mr. Hemenway's office, but above all compare it very carefully with the one which appeared on the mirror in Mrs. Patterson's room."

As Gates stepped forward to comply with Quincy's instructions a sneering grin of triumph

flashed for a moment over McKechnie's face, but no answering grin came back from Long Tom, who was sullenly extending his thumb for the impression. Gates went rapidly about his work and in a few moments had the impression of Long Tom's thumb laid beside the photographs on the card table. As he bent over the table to make the comparison, however, an expression of astonishment appeared on his face, and he strained sharply forward.

"Sawyer," he exclaimed excitedly. "These prints are not the same!"

"Of course they aren't the same," McKechnie sneered. "You fellows are in bad, and you'd better take these irons off Tom and me, or you'll sweat proper for this job." He glared threateningly as he concluded.

"Don't grow overheated, Ike," Quincy cautioned him coolly. "Remember that I didn't say they were the same. In fact, I knew they were not."

With the exception of Long Tom all regarded him incredulously; but the sandbagger still sat with head bowed hopelessly, and with an air of complete dejection.

"Now, listen," Quincy continued, "because right here we have the keystone of the whole affair, and one of diabolical cunning it is. You will remember, Gates, that I carefully questioned Mrs. Patterson in order to discover whether her assailant ap-

proached her from one side or from behind. Now, Gates, approaching as he did from behind, how in the world could he have so manœuvred as to accidentally touch a mirror which lay on the table some distance in front of her? Furthermore, why should a man, in leaving an office which was well lighted, carefully impress his thumb on the door some distance above the knob? Were those actions accidental? Most assuredly they were not.

"Those thumb prints were placed purposely, and with the desire that they should be discovered. Why? Because they were not the prints of the assailant's thumb, but were artificial prints intended to throw investigators off the track. He well knew that no court in the world would convict him on such circumstantial evidence as might be offered against him, provided it could be shown that his thumb print was different from those found on the scenes of his crimes.

"Study that photograph of the thumb print on the mirror, Gates. Don't you see the peculiarity it possesses? Look at it. It is a double thumb print. You can see the tip of another thumb at the side of the main print and farther over on the mirror you can see where two knuckles lightly touched the glass. Do you follow me? Good. Now, look here."

As he concluded he drew from his pocket the

object he had taken from Long Tom and laid it on the table, still keeping it covered with his hand. Slowly he removed his hand, and left lying on the table a mummified human thumb, at which his companions stared aghast.

"That," he stated triumphantly, "is the key to the thumb-print riddle. That thumb, treated by some process which preserved it, has been used for the purpose of hiding the tracks of the real criminal in this case. It was a simple matter for the man to rub the thumb on the palm of his hand until it gathered sufficient moisture and oil to make an impression on the glass, or to dip it in ink, as was the method in the office. When making the imprint on the mirror, however, he made the fatal error of touching the tip of his own thumb to the glass while holding the dummy, and thus he supplied us with the suspicious phenomenon of a double thumb print. That thumb," he regarded it with disgust, "is so far gone that it could never have been used again, but it did its work in this case and, but for the slightest of slips on the part of Long Tom, it would have defeated us."

For some time after he had concluded his remarks no word was spoken, the only sounds in the room being the nervously excited breathing of the men or the creaking of a chair as one shifted his position. Then McKechnie moodily raised his eyes.

"You can't take it all out on us," he growled. "Lorillard has got to come in for his share. He planned it."

"Lorillard," Quincy stated, "has already been arrested. He was taken on my complaint early in the evening and is now awaiting you at police headquarters. Will you go to the station in a cab without making any trouble or shall I have Inspector Gates call a patrol wagon?"

McKechnie glared sullenly at the handcuffs which pinioned his wrists. "We'll go in a cab," he growled. "I guess the game's up."

II

THE AFFAIR OF THE GOLDEN BELT

"Do you mean to tell me," Quincy demanded, staring incredulously at his visitor and chewing nervously at the stem of his pipe, "that a man may be apparently murdered on your own grounds, buried within a hundred feet of your own house, and yet you have absolutely no idea as to his identity?"

"That's just what I mean, sir," the bald-headed little man before him reiterated testily. "I haven't the slightest idea who this man is, nor where he came from. If I knew all these things I would not have considered it necessary to have come to you for aid."

Quincy grinned at the irritability of the reply and carefully scrutinized his guest. The man was short, stout, very bald, and, to cap it all, possessed a pair of pop eyes that blinked owlishly from behind great round spectacles. He possessed the air of a man who is perpetually excited, and the possibility of being able to draw an intelligent story from him with a single telling seemed remote in the extreme.

"Now just let me get the facts of this affair fixed firmly in my mind," Quincy said slowly. "As I understand it, you own a farm in Yokum, where you spend your summers, and you have been there some two months this season. On your farm is a large tract of woodland which surrounds your house and practically isolates you from all neighbours. You were walking in that woodland, quite near your house, early this morning, when your dog suddenly showed great excitement and began digging in what appeared to be freshly turned earth. What sort of a dog have you?"

"A fox terrier, sir, and he was —"

"Just a moment," Quincy broke in with upraised hand. "I want to get at this story as I understand it. We shall leave the details until later. Your curiosity was aroused by the dog's actions, and you dug into the earth with a stick, uncovering, at a depth of less than two feet, a human hand. Now I want to get a connected idea as to just what you did then. Did you continue to dig or did you immediately go for Doctor Weston?"

"I immediately went for Doctor Weston," the man replied. "I knew that there must have been foul play of some sort, and I wished to have a witness on hand before I went any further. Doctor Weston is a neighbour and friend of mine in the city."

"Very good," said Quincy. "Then you and the doctor dug into the earth and uncovered the body of a man, the doctor assuring you that the dead man had probably been living within twenty-four hours, possibly less. You have no idea as to who the man may have been, nor had the doctor ever seen him. Am I right so far, Mr. Brown?"

"You are." The little man's excitement was rising again and, as it rose, he spoke with an almost comical air of astonishment. "But you must bear in mind, sir, that the man had been murdered, sir, murdered, and buried on my land. Why, the back of his head was all smashed in."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Brown, I understand that he had been murdered," Quincy assured him. "It is hardly probable that such extraordinary care would have been taken in concealing the body had the man died of measles, say. Now, what did you do with the body and what was your next step following that?"

"We left the body right beside the hole from which we took it, sir, and Doctor Weston went to summon the medical examiner. I hastened here to find you, because I knew that we should need more able assistance on the case than that which the local constabulary could give us. You will help us out, won't you?" he concluded anxiously.

Quincy was silent for several seconds. "Yes,"

he said slowly, "I certainly think that I must help you out. This particular case presents so many alluring points that I cannot let it pass. You see I have here the novel necessity of not only establishing the motive for the crime and finding the criminal, but I must also establish the identity of the murdered man and discover why he should have been on your land at the time of his death. No, I cannot let such a case as this one pass me. If you please, Mr. Brown, I wish you would accompany me immediately to your farm and let me look over the ground while the trail is yet fresh. If the man has been dead so short a time as your friend, the doctor, tells you, it is evident that the murderer has not been able to secure a very great start. Come, let us go to Yokum at once."

While on the way to the railroad station Quincy had very little to say, and, once seated in the train, he retired utterly within himself, and sank into a deep study, from which he did not emerge until the train had nearly completed the short run to Yokum. Then, arousing himself momentarily, he demanded: "Have you any serious enemies, so far as you know, Mr. Brown?"

Brown started violently at the words, and the suddenness with which they were hurled at him. "Not to my knowledge, sir," he rejoined, as soon as he had somewhat recovered from his agitation. "Are

you wondering if this man might have been mistaken for me?" he asked somewhat anxiously.

"Not at all," Quincy laughingly replied. "I had a far different idea in my mind. But here we are in Yokum, so let us defer our consideration of the case until we have examined the evidence at first hand."

Brown's carriage was awaiting them and a short drive took them to the scene of the mystery. There they found Doctor Weston and the medical examiner engaged in an animated discussion regarding the force which must have been behind a blow in order to crush in a man's skull as had been done in the present instance. Quincy regarded them with a dry smile for a few moments before interrupting.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said; "but is this the extent of your progress in the examination?"

At the words the medical examiner started somewhat guiltily. "We have only just arrived," he hastened to explain. "I was out attending a patient when Doctor Weston came to my house, and he was obliged to wait some little time for my return. If you will pardon me now, Doctor," he continued to Doctor Weston, "I shall make my examination."

As the examiner bent over the body, which still lay in the spot where it had been placed after having been taken from its insufficient grave, Quincy was close at his elbow. The body, he saw, was that of

a young man, well dressed and bearing every appearance of fastidious care, in spite of the earth stains with which the clothing was now covered. The smooth-shaven face was in complete repose, a fact which seemed to indicate that death had come unexpectedly and instantaneously, a supposition which was still further supported by the fact that the blow had undoubtedly been dealt from behind.

The medical examiner proceeded to make a careful investigation of the dead man's pockets, but, in spite of the fact that the pockets were laden with the usual collection of minor articles that a man will generally carry, not a scrap of paper, either letter or card, was present to indicate the identity of the body. One thing which was on the body, however, caused a start of surprise to all present. This was a large roll of bills which lay loosely in one of the pockets, and which did not seem to have been in the least disturbed. Thus, any possibility of a murder for the sake of robbery was apparently disposed of.

After several minutes of careful investigation the medical examiner rose and turned a puzzled face toward Quincy.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Sawyer?" he inquired.

Quincy slowly shook his head. "Very little as yet," he replied. "It is evident, of course, that the

blow was struck with some blunt instrument, causing instant death. It would also seem, from the fact that so little blood appears on the clothing, that the body was not allowed to lie after death, but was immediately dragged or carried to this spot and buried. Beyond those very obvious facts I do not feel that I can go at present."

He paused for some little time after he had finished speaking, and stood absently caressing his chin while he studied the body with great intentness. Then he suddenly stooped and fumbled eagerly about the man's coat, turning, with one knee still resting on the ground, while he again addressed the examiner.

"Doctor, here seems to be another peculiar feature. The man's belt is missing."

"Do you suppose," Doctor Weston interposed, "that it was a money belt?"

"That is possible, of course," Quincy replied with a trace of doubt in his tone, "but I hardly think it could have been a fact in this case. That is, I do not think that any valuables which the man might have carried were directly responsible for his death. That roll of bills seems to preclude such a supposition. Whatever the purpose of the murder might have been I hardly think that it could have been robbery."

It was plain that he was deeply puzzled by the

affair, and it was several minutes before he again removed his gaze from the body, his face showing that he was by no means satisfied with the information at hand. He devoted some time to a careful examination of the articles which had been taken from the man's pockets. In the collection was a perfectly plain white handkerchief, a small pocket flask, a cigarette case, match safe and various small bits of personal property. On the match safe, however, Quincy quickly centred his attention, the safe being the only article which bore the faintest semblance of a clue which might lead to the body's identification. Even the clue offered by the safe was faint, indeed, being nothing more than the engraved block letters "E. B. F." Quincy placed the safe in his pocket and quietly arose.

"How long has that man been dead, in your opinion, Doctor?" he inquired of the examiner.

"Less than twenty-four hours," was the reply. "I even think I might be willing to hazard the opinion that he must have been murdered and buried last night."

"Well, we can do little until we are able to discover something about him. We must discover, if possible, when he came here, where he was last seen, and, above all, with whom he talked. In that way we may be able to find out who he was, and then we shall have something to work on."

As Quincy and Doctor Weston walked away from the grounds, Brown and the medical examiner having remained behind to arrange for the disposal of the body, the doctor inquired casually:

"Well, Mr. Sawyer, what do you make of the case?"

"My dear Doctor," Quincy replied, "I have absolutely no grounds on which to base any opinion whatever, as yet. The case is one which will require considerable investigation and, as an opening, I wish to inquire as to whether or not you are well acquainted with Mr. Brown?"

The doctor gave him a sharp glance, but Quincy's expressionless face told him nothing. "I am fairly well acquainted with Mr. Brown," he responded guardedly, "but I have never been on intimate terms with him."

"Of course you can form no opinion as to why a spot almost within plain sight of Mr. Brown's house should have been chosen as the burial place for the murdered man?"

"I can form no opinion whatever about the case," the doctor replied, with an emphasis that brought a smile to Quincy's face.

Quincy did not press the subject and soon afterward separated from the doctor at the latter's residence. He then threw himself heart and soul into the investigation in hand, making careful inquiries

at every point where he imagined that the unfortunate young man might have been seen. On every hand, however, he was met by a baffling lack of knowledge. It seemed incredible that a man could have arrived at so small a town and have then completely disappeared without a single resident, or hanger-on at the station, having caught so much as a glimpse of him. Furthermore, it seemed likewise incredible that the natural curiosity of the countryman had not caused those who had seen the man, for he had no doubt about the man's having been seen by somebody, to retain a mental note of his appearance.

Just as dusk fell he made his way, now completely nonplussed, to the little railroad station, being obliged to return to Boston that evening. Being some minutes in advance of his train he lighted a cigar and strolled aimlessly along the platform, his mind fully occupied with the problem which confronted him. Suddenly, just at the side of the baggage-room door, he paused, his eyes fixed on an innocent-appearing suitcase which stood before him. Plainly stencilled on the end of the suitcase in black letters were the initials " E. B. F." Giving no outward sign of the eagerness which was within him, Quincy turned and carelessly beckoned to the station agent.

" Was that case left here by a young man dressed

"HE PAUSED, HIS EYES FIXED ON AN INNOCENT-APPEARING SUITCASE."

in a light brown suit?" he inquired, as the agent hurried to his side.

The agent thoughtfully scratched his ear for a moment. "Yes, it was," he broke out suddenly, his face lighting with remembrance. "I remember him now. He came in on the train from Boston last night, and wanted to leave his case here while he went somewhere up in the town. He said he'd be back after it, but he didn't come. Are you a friend of his?"

"Yes," Quincy casually informed him, holding a half dollar conspicuously in his hand. "He asked me to bring his case up to him. There will be no objection, I suppose, as long as it isn't checked."

"No, sir," the agent responded, pocketing the coin with alacrity. "The railroad company is not responsible for it and I'll be glad to get it out of my way."

Once aboard the train, Quincy gave himself over to thought. So his man had come from Boston. Well, that had seemed reasonably certain from the first, and it brought him no nearer to his goal. The matter of the suitcase, however, struck him as being decidedly significant. If the man had left it at the station, it was perfectly obvious that he had intended to return for it, and it further needed but a slight stretch of the imagination in order to establish the probability that the man had made the

trip to Yokum with the intention of visiting some definite point in the town. It was then but a brief step onward to suppose that the man must have appeared in answer to an appointment.

"I presume," Quincy confided to his cigar, "that this is another case where we must first find the woman, and from her trace down the man. I wish, though, that I might find some sign of Mr. E. B. F. in Boston." He allowed his gaze to rest momentarily on the suitcase beneath his feet. "Well, we have good cause for hope at any rate."

When he entered his own rooms, shortly after his arrival in the city, he was astonished to find Inspector Gates seated there, reading a magazine and coolly consuming Quincy's choicest cigars.

"Hello, Sawyer," came Gates's easy greeting. "I was beginning to be afraid that you wouldn't return tonight. Been far?" The last with a glance at the suitcase.

"No, only a short distance out. This case is borrowed." He deposited it in an inconspicuous corner before returning to the table. "What's up? Am I to take this intrusion as a social or a professional visit?"

Gates grinned and stretched himself lazily. "I wish you'd smoke better cigars, Sawyer," he complained. "But, to get down to business, for my visit is strictly of a professional nature. I have on

my hands one of the most curious murders, in point of lack of clues, that I ever tackled, and I want your help."

"Sorry, Gates," Quincy hastened to interpose, "but I have one decidedly baffling murder case on my hands now, and I hardly feel competent to undertake another at the same time."

Gates was plainly disappointed at the information. "Oh, say, that's too bad!" he exclaimed. "I've been counting on you to help me out, and it seems to be a case where two heads are surely needed."

Quincy seated himself on the opposite side of the table and observed Gates narrowly. A very friendly feeling had sprung up between the two men of late, so much so that both had come to enjoy the cases in which they co-operated.

"Tell me something about your case," Quincy suggested at last.

Gates hitched himself about in his chair. "The victim," he said, "is old Mr. Fenton of Newbury Street. You probably know of him. He's the old chap who cleaned up several fortunes two years ago on the stock exchange, and then had sense enough to retire before he lost them. His household consisted of himself, his son, and his two servants, and that is about all I can find out about him. Nobody seems to have any idea as to where he came from

originally or what his past history may be. But, here! Let me get at the nub of the story first, and then, if you want details, we can go into them later.

"He was murdered some time after two o'clock this morning, death being due to a stab wound in his side. No clue whatever seems to exist that would point to the murderer. According to the stories of the two servants, they were awakened at about half-past one this morning, when Fenton returned home from his club. He seemed to be having trouble with the door and made considerable noise in closing it, but both servants agree that he seemed to be alone and that they heard no sound of voices. They plainly heard him go into the library where he appeared to settle down, and then all was quiet. Shortly after two o'clock, Jones, the man servant, was awakened by what sounded like a faint scuffling in the library. He became alarmed, and, rising, he hastily threw on his clothes and hurried to that room. He found the library door open, the room fully lighted, and his master stretched on the floor, dead, with a knife wound in his side.

"Jones did not appear to lose his head over the affair, for he first aroused the cook and then telephoned for the police. When the officers arrived they found things to be just as I have described

them, with the additional fact that Fenton's wallet, containing a large sum of money, lay on the library table, apparently where he had placed it. To cap the whole thing, however, and the weirdest point of all, is the fact that, although Fenton's money was untouched, his belt had been removed and carried away."

"His what?" Quincy almost shouted the words.

Gates started violently at the vehemence of the exclamation and stared with some surprise in Quincy's direction. "His belt, man, his belt," he reiterated with some show of irritability. "I'm sure I spoke the words plainly enough."

"There is no doubt on that score," Quincy assured him. "But, I say, Gates. Do you know anything about this son of Fenton's? You say they lived together?"

"I know of him, yes, although I have not yet met him. He has been away from the house since last night, and has not yet been located. But, what of him?"

"What is his name? Do you know that?"

"Yes, it is Edgar. Edgar Bronson Fenton. But what in the world is the matter with you, man? Do you know him?"

"No, I don't know him," Quincy replied, leaning weakly back in his chair, "and there is nothing the matter with me except that I am going to act

with you on this case." He leaned forward impressively and spoke the final words distinctly into the inspector's face. "Edgar Bronson Fenton was murdered in Yokum last evening for no apparent reason other than the desire of some person to secure Fenton's belt. His belt was stolen. That is his suitcase which I just brought in."

Incredulity and astonishment seemed to struggle for supremacy in the inspector's face. "Jumping Jerusalem! Sawyer, what are we getting into?" he exclaimed. "Has somebody set out with the intention of annihilating the Fentons and collecting their belts as souvenirs, after the manner in which the early Indians collected scalps? What do you make of this thing?"

"Perhaps the suitcase will show us," Quincy suggested, placing it on the table between them.

He quickly unfastened the straps of the case and tried the lock. It sprang back at his touch and he threw open the cover. With one accord the two men bent forward eagerly. As they had expected, the case contained the usual collection of toilet articles and clothing, but it also contained one other article which caught their attention at once, it being an empty leather holster, of the square type made expressly to fit into a man's back pocket.

"Hm," mused Gates, as he raised the holster. "Young Fenton went armed, did he? Evidently he

expected, or was at least prepared for, trouble. So long as the examiner failed to find the pistol in his search, Sawyer, I suppose the murderer must have carried that away also."

"It is possible," Quincy replied. "Or the pistol may have been dropped at the spot where the assault occurred. Perhaps young Fenton, expecting trouble, was walking with the pistol in his hand at the time when he was struck down."

They laid the holster carefully aside and dug deeper into the suitcase, removing all the articles which seemed to have no bearing on the matter until the case lay empty before them. Gates ran his hand into the pocket of the cover, and his form seemed to stiffen with anticipation as he drew out a folded sheet of paper. He opened the sheet and hastily read the lines it contained, after which he passed the sheet with a quick jerk to Quincy.

"Read that," he commanded.

Holding it beneath the light Quincy read:

"'Bring it to Yokum tomorrow night. I'll meet you at the same place. This is the last opportunity you'll have, so take warning. H. B.'

"H. B., Henry Brown," Quincy mused. "I wonder if it can be possible."

"What are you talking about?" Gates demanded. "Let me in on the rest of the story, Sawyer."

In a few words Quincy did so. "The man on whose land the body was found is named Henry Brown," he concluded; "but what I am trying to understand, Gates, is why the murderer took the trouble to bury young Fenton's body."

"He wanted to hide it, perhaps," Gates suggested. "But why should he have undertaken to hide it right in Brown's dooryard when he had whole acres of barren land to dig in?"

"That isn't the point," Quincy insisted. "He may have buried it practically on the very spot where the murder was committed, for it would have been a long, hard haul to have dragged it off into the woods. What I want to get at, though, is why he should have buried it at all. Why didn't he leave it just where it fell? He must have known that sooner or later somebody from Brown's household would have discovered the freshly turned earth, which would inevitably result in a natural curiosity on their part to discover why the earth had been turned over. But, above all, if he knew that Brown possessed a fox terrier he must have been certain that the dog would find the place and attract attention to it. Furthermore, Gates, where did the murderer secure the tools with which to dig? He certainly couldn't have carried them with him."

Gates shrugged his shoulders in token of acknow-

ledged lack of comprehension. "He might have stolen them from Brown's barn," he said, but without apparent conviction.

"Yes, he might have done that," Quincy admitted. "But see here, Gates, doesn't everything seem to point to the fact that Brown had every opportunity to do the deed himself? There is the note with Brown's initials, although we do not as yet know, of course, that it is in his handwriting. The body was found buried on Brown's land. Why else should young Fenton have been on that land, so close to Brown's house, unless it was for the purpose of meeting Brown? The body was buried. Why? Because Brown wished to find it himself and took that method to insure himself against the possibility of some other person making the discovery. If the body was discovered above ground people would be disposed to suggest that Brown might be guilty; but if it was discovered by Brown himself, buried within a stone's throw of his house, the general tendency would be to argue that he could have had nothing to do with the murder and was merely a victim of circumstances. Mind, I do not say that I suspect Brown. I am merely setting forth a possibility so that we may have it clearly in our minds when we begin our search. There is still one important question to be answered. If Brown killed young Fenton, who killed the old

man? Also, why were the belts taken? That fact points to the probability of the murders being committed for the same purpose and by one person or set of accomplices. I fancy, Gates, that we have a deep problem to solve, and I would suggest that we now turn in for the night so as to be able to get an early start in the morning."

"Where shall we begin?" Gates inquired.

"I imagine that the best place would be at Fenton's house on Newbury Street. After that we can use our own judgment, and go either to Yokum or to whatever place may be suggested to us as matters develop."

Early the following morning Quincy and Gates breakfasted hurriedly and proceeded at once to the Fenton home. The house was silent and seemingly lifeless, save for the man servant, who was making preparations for receiving young Fenton's body which, in response to several lengthy telephone conversations on the part of Gates, had been sent for. Jones seemed slightly annoyed at the appearance of the two detectives, and the consequent interruption of his work, but he appeared to accept the pair as a necessary evil and courteously ushered them into the library, which, except for the removal of the elder Fenton's body, had been left in precisely the same condition as at the time of the murder.

"You need not wait here, Jones," Gates remarked, noting the man's evident impatience. "Continue with your work and we will call you if you are needed."

When the man had departed Quincy glanced searchingly about the room. The library was small, but not cramped, and was fitted with handsome leather-upholstered furniture. Along its sides ran well-filled bookcases, and in one corner stood a large desk, its top covered with neat piles of books and periodicals. In the very centre of the room stood the table, the abiding place, apparently, of the numerous daily papers with which Fenton had been in the habit of supplying himself. On this table, also, exactly as Gates had previously described, lay a capacious leather wallet.

"Has that been examined, Gates?" Quincy inquired, pointing toward the wallet.

"Yes, but it contained nothing aside from several hundred dollars in bills. There are no papers which might furnish us with even a hint. Neither were there any papers in his pockets."

Quincy searched his companion a moment with narrowed eyes. "Gates," he demanded, "do you suppose it is by coincidence or design that no papers of any sort have been found on either of the bodies?"

Gates shook his head slowly. "Sawyer," he

replied. "The more I think about this case the less I understand it."

Without further loss of time they devoted themselves diligently to the task of searching the room down to its most minute detail. The desk was examined from top to bottom, and then searched for possible secret drawers; the book shelves were cleared and searched; every drawer in the room was emptied; but, in spite of their utmost care and diligence the search was unrewarded. Not a single clue, nor even the slightest piece of valuable information, were they able to discover. At length, with a sigh of recognized failure, Quincy perched himself on the edge of the library table and toyed carelessly with a paper knife on which his hand had chanced to rest.

"You did not find the knife with which Fenton was stabbed, did you, Gates?" he inquired, after a thoughtful pause.

"No," Gates replied from the floor, where he was busily prodding the carpet. "The medical examiner said that from the nature of the wound he must have been stabbed with some sort of a curved-bladed knife. From his description I should think it must have been done with one of those old-time Saracen daggers you see in pictures of the middle ages."

Quincy did not reply at once, his mind being busy

with the paper knife, which had now caught his more concentrated attention. A puzzled frown wrinkled his forehead, and his eyes were narrowed to mere slits, as was his habit when in deep study. Suddenly he sprang to the floor and crossed hastily to the window, where he carefully examined the knife, his interest seeming to increase until it closely approached suppressed excitement.

"Gates," he called sharply. "Gates, come here."

With a bound Gates was at his side, anticipation in his eyes. "What is it?" he questioned eagerly. "Do you think you have found the knife?"

"No, no, not *the* knife, but *a* knife," Quincy replied. "But, look at it, Gates. Don't you see anything interesting about it?"

"It looks like one of those daggers I just described," Gates responded slowly.

"It is, Gates. It's a Damascus dagger. But look at its hilt. Don't you see the engraving there?"

Gates squinted thoughtfully at the point indicated. "I can see some queer letters there," he admitted slowly, "but I can't quite make them out. They look something like H. B., but I can't be sure."

"They *are* the letters H. B.," Quincy stated. "They are engraved in Spanish script, and I should say that the engraving must have been done a cen-

tury or two ago, although the dagger, of course, is much older than that. We now have another angle on H. B., Gates, and this angle raises a new question. Is H. B. ancient or modern, and if he is modern, how came his initials here? In other words, I believe we have come to a point where we must discover whether H. B. is an individual, or some sort of a secret band, perhaps several centuries old. That dagger, Gates, regardless of its blade, and considering only its jewelled hilt and the gold scroll work, must be worth hundreds if not thousands of dollars. Therefore, if H. B. is an individual, he must be a wealthy one, and, if he owns that dagger, how does it happen that Fenton left it carelessly lying about on his library table where it has patently served as a paper knife?"

"Are you sure that is not the knife with which Fenton was stabbed?"

"Positive. A man cannot stab another man and then drop his knife on a table without leaving some signs. I doubt if that dagger, considering the presence of the jewels, particularly the pearls, could have been cleaned, after use of that nature, without washing. You will notice that there is not the faintest sign of a stain upon it."

"Possibly it has a mate," Gates hazarded.

"Undoubtedly it has. Our problem is now to discover the owner of the mate, and to ascertain

where both were on the night of the murder. It seems, Gates, that if we can discover H. B. we shall have a powerful side-light on the murder of the Fentons. Now, suppose you call Jones and let us question him."

Jones seemed somewhat agitated when he stood before them, in response to a summons from Gates, but whether the agitation came from impatience to be again at his work or from fear of the examination Quincy could not satisfactorily decide. Of one thing he felt reasonably convinced, and that was that Jones had no hand in the murder and that he knew nothing of the identity of the murderer.

"Jones," Quincy asked, "were these windows locked when you entered this room after the murder?"

"No, sir," Jones replied without hesitation. "They were all closed, but they were not locked."

"Were they habitually left unlocked?"

"I think not, sir. Mr. Fenton assumed the entire care of them, so I cannot answer for certain. I think he always locked them."

"How long have you been with Mr. Fenton, Jones?"

"About two years, sir. Ever since he took this house." Jones's diffidence seemed to be falling away somewhat under the sound of his own voice.

"Do you know anything about where he came from originally? Did you ever chance to hear either Mr. Fenton or his son refer to a former place of residence?"

"No, sir. I have been under the impression that Mr. Fenton came to Boston when Mr. Edgar was quite young, and the chances are that Mr. Edgar would have remembered very little of his former life. Mr. Fenton never had any visitors who seemed to have known him before he came here, and I never heard him mention any friends aside from his business acquaintances in Boston."

"Have you noticed any peculiarity about either Mr. Fenton or his son of late?"

Jones hesitated slightly, and seemed puzzled. "Yes, sir," he replied slowly, "I have. They have seemed nervous, almost frightened, or at least Mr. Fenton has. I thought, though, that it might be due to overwork and did not pay any attention to it."

"Did their mail come here or was it delivered at Mr. Fenton's office?"

"At the office, sir. The only letter that was ever delivered here came about two weeks ago. That was about the time that Mr. Fenton began to appear nervous."

"Did you chance to notice the postmark on that

letter?" Quincy's tone was becoming more and more eager.

"Yes, sir. It was marked Lurie, Vermont. I handed it to Mr. Fenton when he returned that evening and he put it in his pocket. I have never seen it since."

"And you have heard no bit of conversation since that time that struck you as being peculiar or worthy of note?"

"There was one remark I chanced to overhear. It did not sound particularly strange at the time, and I do not know whether it will seem significant to you now; but you can judge for yourself. Late in the afternoon before Mr. Fenton was killed, he and Mr. Edgar were in the library together. From the tones of their voices, and the way each appeared to be talking for long intervals at a stretch, I judged that they were arguing about something. After a while Mr. Edgar started to leave the room and, as he stood in the doorway, I heard him say: 'Well, I'm going out tonight and settle it with him.' Mr. Fenton seemed worried, and he told Mr. Edgar to look out because he, the man they were talking about, was dangerous. Then Mr. Edgar said: 'You're not going to give it up to him are you?' When Mr. Fenton replied that he surely had no such intention, Mr. Edgar answered: 'I shall have my revolver,' and closed the door. That was

the only strange conversation I ever overheard, sir."

"Did you ever notice any peculiarity about their belts?" Quincy continued, and Gates leaned forward intently at the question.

"Yes, sir. They had one belt which was very peculiar, and sometimes Mr. Fenton, and sometimes Mr. Edgar, wore it. One or the other of them had it always. It was a very heavy belt with a gold buckle, and it looked very old. I never saw one like it anywhere else, and I imagine that it was quite valuable because they guarded it with extreme care. I am not certain who had it on the night of the murder, but I think it was Mr. Fenton. The belt was of brown leather, and the buckle was all covered with queer marks that looked as though they might have been letters of some strange foreign language. I could tell it anywhere if I should see it again."

"You say you do not know which of the men had it on that particular night and, for that matter, you cannot tell, can you, whether either was wearing it?"

"No, sir. They had two other belts that looked very much like it, and when one of them was wearing the real belt the other always wore one of the copies."

"Oh, I see. Why didn't you tell us that in the

first place? There seems a strong possibility under these circumstances that neither may have worn it at that particular time."

"I think one of them must have had it, sir, because I have found one of the copies upstairs in Mr. Fenton's room. The other copy is gone, and I think it very likely that the real belt is gone also."

"Were the copies exact reproductions of the real belt?"

"No, they were merely heavy belts with plated buckles. At a distance, or to a person unfamiliar with them, they looked much like the real belt; but, if you were familiar with the real belt, you could readily tell the difference when you were close to the copies."

For some time Quincy sat thinking deeply, while Gates made notes in an abstracted manner and Jones fidgeted about uneasily.

"You may go now, Jones," Quincy finally remarked. "If you should chance to think of any other bits of information which have slipped your mind for the present, be sure and tell us of them." He remained silent until after Jones's departure and then addressed Gates. "Did you ever hear of Lurie, Vermont? If so, where is it?"

"I have never heard of the place nor have I the faintest idea as to where it may be," Gates replied. "There must be an atlas somewhere in this

collection of books, though, so let's hunt the place up."

They discovered the atlas and remained silent for a brief space of time while each pored over a different section of the map of Vermont. At last Gates placed his finger on the upper edge of the map. "Here's a place of that name," he remarked; "but it's so far up I can't tell for certain whether it's in Vermont or in Canada. But how the deuce is it possible for a person to get in and out of the place? There doesn't seem to be the least sign of a railroad within ten miles."

"By stage, probably," replied Quincy, carefully examining the territory immediately surrounding Lurie on the map. "And probably there is only one stage a day, which may run either in the morning or at night, it being safe to say, however, that it will run at the time opposite the time of our arrival."

"So we are going up, are we?" Gates remarked. "It does seem to be the only clue we have at present, and, if Fenton ever was known there, we certainly should not experience any difficulty in discovering the fact. Probably there aren't above three hundred people there. But I say, Sawyer. What about Henry Brown?"

"We must by all means keep a watch over Mr. Brown. I would leave you behind to keep tabs on

him, Gates, except for the fact that I think two of us may be needed in Vermont. That village is likely to be scattered and it may take time for us to locate our clue. In that case, of course, we shall be able to divide the work, and do it much more rapidly. We must run down to Yokum today before we go to Vermont. Brown's premises have not been examined closely enough, and I shall be uneasy until the work has been more carefully attended to."

"I have what I think is a good idea, Sawyer," Gates volunteered. "Suppose that, when we go down today, I take along one of my men. Then, after we have made our examination, we can leave him behind to look wise and keep himself in the public eye. That will serve two purposes. It will keep Brown very much interested at home, provided he knows anything of the affair, and it will also serve to distract attention from us when we slip out to make our Vermont trip. We shall not want any undue publicity to attend us to Lurie."

"A good idea, Gates," Quincy answered approvingly. "That will provide for every detail, and will leave us free to pursue whatever clues we may hit upon. Now let us run down to Yokum and examine the ground as thoroughly as will be possible in the short time allowed us. I do not think we had best stay there later than the middle of the

afternoon because, if there is any information to be discovered in Vermont, the quicker we secure it the better able we shall be to cope with this matter. What do you think of Jones?"

"I think he is to be trusted," Gates replied quickly.

"So do I. Let us arrange with him to remain in the house until we return, or until he hears from us. That will give us a means of checking up all that may happen here. Now call up your man and have him meet us at the station."

When Quincy and Gates, with the "shadow" from headquarters, descended from a decrepit depot carriage at Brown's home in Yokum, Brown himself immediately appeared upon the piazza. He greeted them with civility, but seemed to entertain a pronounced suspicion in regard to Gates and the third man.

"This, Mr. Brown," said Quincy, indicating the "shadow," "is Mr. Anderson. He is to assist in this case, and will assume active charge of the investigation here in Yokum."

Brown showed evident dislike for the arrangement. "But I thought I engaged you to investigate the case," he protested. "I do not want an assistant working on it. It is far too important a matter."

"The importance of the case is the very reason

why an assistant is being left here, Mr. Brown," Quincy stated somewhat ambiguously. "In fact, the case is far more important than you realize. I shall be continually at work on it, but I shall be unable to spend my time here. My clues, you know, will demand much of my time; but it is necessary for me to be always reliably informed of developments at this end."

Brown seemed partially satisfied by the statement, meaningless as it was, and glanced toward Gates, whom Quincy carelessly introduced as another assistant who would work outside the village.

"Now, Mr. Brown," he continued, "have you missed any farming tools from your barn or tool house?"

"I can't say whether any have been missed or not," Brown replied, openly mystified. "But I have nothing to do with the tools. Wait a moment until I call my farmer."

When the farmer had been summoned, and had appeared, Quincy repeated his question. For a moment the man seemed silenced by surprise, but he quickly recovered his speech.

"No," he replied, "there have been none missing. May I inquire why you ask?"

"Certainly," Quincy replied courteously, recognizing that the independence of a New England farmer is not to be lightly disregarded. "I ask be-

cause of the fact that whoever buried the body which was discovered here must necessarily have had recourse to your tool house in order to have procured the means with which to do the work."

The force of the statement seemed to strike the man at once, and almost before Quincy had finished speaking he replied: "There have been no tools missing; but, now that you mention it, I remember finding a pick and a shovel thrown into one corner of the tool house yesterday morning. When I picked them up to return them to their places I noticed that there was fresh earth on them both. And say —" He broke off abruptly to dig eagerly into a back pocket — "I wonder if this thing is connected with the affair," and he produced an automatic pistol.

"Where did you find that?" demanded Quincy and Gates almost in a breath.

"I found it this morning about twenty feet in front of the tool house. I intended to turn it over to Mr. Brown, but I forgot about it."

"That pistol is mine," Brown suddenly affirmed, to the complete astonishment of all. "I lost it out of my pocket last night when I went down toward the hen houses thinking I heard a fox there." He held out his hand and the farmer, with doubt plainly visible in his eyes, slowly relinquished the pistol.

Brown quietly dropped it in his pocket and, with-

out comment, Quincy and Gates turned away for their investigation. Throughout the early portion of the afternoon they searched the land immediately surrounding the spot where the body had been discovered, but their search proved fruitless. Not a single clue could they discover, nor even a circumstance which might be twisted into a clue. At last they reluctantly abandoned the search and, after carefully instructing Anderson, made their way back to Boston.

Arriving in the city they made their way directly to Quincy's rooms, where they proposed making their final preparations before taking the early evening accommodation train which would drop them at the railroad point nearest to Lurie. Once in the rooms, Quincy, to the astonishment of Gates, immediately threw open Edgar Fenton's suitcase and produced therefrom the empty leather holster. He then completely dumfounded his companion by coolly drawing from his pocket the automatic pistol which had been claimed by Brown that afternoon.

"How in the world did you get that?" Gates gasped, when he had sufficiently recovered his breath.

"Do you know, Gates?" Quincy replied with a low chuckle, "that I sometimes think I have missed my calling? I think I would have made an excel-

lent pickpocket if my abilities had only been properly developed early in life."

He paused a moment with the pistol in his hand, and then dropped it into the holster. To every crease and line, which long use had worn in the holster, the pistol exactly conformed.

"Whew!" Gates whistled, after a brief pause, during which he had grasped the full significance of the facts. "Shall we go to Vermont?"

"We certainly shall," Quincy replied with conviction. "This is important, but it does not close the case by any means."

The accommodation train for the minor stations of Northern Vermont makes its way by easy stages, which is perhaps one reason why its run is made at night. For, as Gates impatiently pointed out, so slow is it that its being placed on the tracks in the daytime would completely tie up all traffic and block the line from end to end. As it crept jerkily over the rails on the particular run in question, Quincy and Gates, sprawled sleepily over two seats in the smoker, kept up a desultory conversation on almost every subject imaginable except the object of their trip. Frequently their eyes wandered lazily over their fellow-passengers in the car, but these intermittent scrutinies seemed more the result of idle curiosity than of professional interest. In fact, their travelling companions presented anything rather

than an appearance liable to arouse interest, being nearly all asleep, propped in various positions and emitting the usual gamut of peculiar sounds. One man only, an elderly gentleman in the forward portion of the car, showed any signs of wakefulness, and those only at rare intervals when he would raise up to gaze hopefully through the window at a station, only to invariably sink back again with a resigned sigh.

"The old chap down front seems uneasy," Gates remarked, eyeing the man with quiet amusement. "He probably isn't used to sleeping on the seats of day coaches."

"Well, we won't be obliged to perch on this one much longer, glory be," Quincy groaned, stirring uneasily. "The next stop is ours."

"Yes, and then ten miles by stage," Gates replied dismally. "Do we go there tonight?"

"We do not," Quincy replied emphatically. "We sleep in one of the hotels tonight and make the stage trip tomorrow. But, come on. Here we are, at last."

With much stretching of cramped muscles they swung off the train, almost unconsciously taking note of the other passengers who descended from their car. There were two; the restless old gentleman to whom their attention had been drawn and a man of foreign appearance, both of whom imme-

diately disappeared, going in opposite directions. Quincy and Gates did not tarry in the station, but made their way immediately to the nearest hotel where they engaged rooms, and within an incredibly short time were both lost in the profound sleep of complete weariness.

Toward morning, however, Quincy was suddenly brought out of his sleep by the sounds of a terrific commotion which originated, apparently, in Gates' room. As he sprang from his bed, and groped hastily for his trousers, he could plainly hear the sound of scuffling, followed by the crash of overturned furniture and numerous grunts, groans and exclamations. He rushed through the door of his room, groping wildly for his revolver and upbraiding himself for carelessness because it was nowhere to be found. At the far end of the corridor he could hear the sound of hastily opened doors and startled conversation, but he paused for neither questions nor explanations, covering the distance between his own and Gates' doors with two sharp bounds.

As he leaped into the inspector's room the sounds increased in violence, and the utter darkness of the place exaggerated them until it seemed as though the room was filled with fighting men. Vainly Quincy groped about in search of the combatants. He could plainly hear them straining and tugging

at each other, could hear their laboured breaths and now and then the crash of some unlucky piece of furniture, but, small as the room was, he could not seem to reach them.

"Gates, Gates," he shouted, "where are you?"

"Over here in the corner," came Gates' reply, the words sounding jerky and disconnected through his panting lips. "Look out, Sawyer!" he yelled, almost immediately afterward. "He's going to shoot."

Although unable to see, himself, Quincy took no chances on the ability of the assailant to do so, and dropped instantly to one knee. As he did so there came the flash of a revolver, followed by a crashing report, and he heard a bullet drone sharply over his head and thud against the wall behind him. The pistol shot, however, had given him his desired information. He knew now where the fight was progressing, and, with a single savage leap, he was across the room and grappling with the two struggling men, vainly endeavouring to pick friend from foe.

From somewhere out of the darkness a heavy fist leaped at him, striking him fairly in the face and sending him reeling backward. He tripped over an overturned chair and, as he fell, he heard another pistol shot. Then his head came sharply into contact with the floor and his senses left him.

As Quincy slowly regained consciousness and sat up, a few moments later, he found Gates fumbling wildly with a lamp and swearing profusely at his inability to light it, a condition which satisfied Quincy regarding the inspector's safety.

"What's the trouble, Gates?" he demanded.

"Trouble!" Gates snorted, at last meeting success with the lamp. "Somebody tried to cut my throat. That's all."

"But who? What for?" Quincy blurted, unable to fully comprehend the occurrence.

"How the blazes do I know who? He was some sort of a foreigner. I could tell that by the lingo he hissed at me. If I could have raised a light there would have been a mighty sick wop in this room, believe me. The devil take a town where they have neither electricity nor gas."

"But tell me about it. What happened? Cool down, Gates, you're more incoherent than a complete novice."

Thus adjured, Gates regained his natural manner. "Well, just this happened," he said. "I woke up to find somebody prowling through my room with an electric flash light. I started to jump out of bed and he heard me, switched out his light and came for me in the dark. As I told you, he hissed some sort of a wop lingo at me as he came, and then he swung at me with a knife, but missed me in

the darkness. You can see where he carved the pillow. Then I jumped at him and we mixed it up all over the floor. It was about then that you showed up and he tried to get away. We shot at each other a couple of times, but he broke away from me and disappeared, out of the window, I guess, and I undertook to raise a light. That's all there was to it. I don't know what he wanted; but I have an idea," he added, after a cautious glance over his shoulder to see if any of the other guests had yet appeared. "I think," he continued in a lowered voice, "that he came in to see if I was wearing a badge. In other words, I have an impression that our business up here is suspected."

"Whew!" Quincy muttered. "If that's the case it looks as though we are on the right track; but our trail bids fair to be a rough one."

Further conversation on the subject was impossible because of the appearance of the landlord with a small horde of guests at his heels, and, by the time peace was once more restored, it was broad daylight. A search of the premises and their surroundings had been productive of nothing, nor had any person seen a man of either strange or suspicious character. Consequently, when the pair started on their stage trip to Lurie, it was in a still unenlightened state of mind.

"I wonder," Quincy muttered, "whether that

visit was an advance greeting from Lurie or an afterclap from Boston."

No answer was forthcoming, however, and Quincy was forced to content himself with a casual examination of his travelling companions. The passengers consisted, aside from themselves, of two salesmen, the old gentleman of the train, and three women. To the salesmen Quincy and Gates paid merely a passing glance; to the women, who were conversing volubly in shrill tones, they accorded no attention whatever; but at the old gentleman they looked with interest. The question as to who he might be, and what might be the object of his journey, rose ever larger in their minds and their concern regarding his presence furnished them with considerable food for thought. At last, to their gratification, one of the women addressed a trifling remark to him, according him the title of "Doctor."

"The old village doctor," Quincy whispered in an aside to Gates. "He should be able to give us information regarding our man. Get acquainted with him, Gates, before we get to the village."

In accordance with his instructions Gates succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the old man, and, by the time the stage came to a stop in the straggling little village of Lurie, all three were conversing freely with one another. As they

alighted, Doctor Barr — they had by this time introduced themselves — turned toward them with a slightly quizzical smile on his face.

"Our village, gentlemen," he said, "boasts of very poor accommodations for strangers. If you care to accept, I shall be very pleased to have you take your noon meal with me. My housekeeper is an excellent cook and I am frankly of the opinion that, if you propose visiting the village for any length of time, you will find it advisable to start well fortified against the meals of the local boarding house."

The two quickly accepted the invitation, a step on which they congratulated themselves when they were seated before the appetizing viands with which the doctor's table was well laden. Throughout the meal very little conversation was indulged in, all three being too busy with the task in hand to think of aught else. As the meal was finished, however, and the men leaned back with expressions of complete satisfaction on their faces, Quincy glanced questioningly toward the doctor.

"Doctor Barr," he inquired, "are you fairly familiar with the various people who have lived in this village during the last few years?"

The doctor glanced up interrogatively at the question, but replied at once. "With every one of them. I have been acquainted with every person

who has claimed residence in this place during the last thirty years."

"Then did you ever know any one named Thomas Fenton?"

"Tom Fenton? Certainly. I was more or less acquainted with him before he left this village. He went to Boston and built up quite a fortune, I understand. His father, Andrew, used to be quite a crony of old Peter Blannett's, although Peter's son, Ferdinand, and Tom never hitched to any extent."

"Ferdinand and Peter Blannett," Quincy repeated with rising interest. "Who are they?"

For a few moments the doctor toyed idly with a teaspoon before replying. "You are now asking a question which has puzzled this village for generations," he said slowly. "Who are the Blannetts? You are in a strange community, gentlemen, and one which possesses its deep mystery. We of Lurie are a body of people unknown to the remainder of our great country, for who out there takes the trouble to locate the various minor units of the single state in our great Union which grows steadily smaller in population instead of larger? We are more completely isolated here than is the most remote frontier town of the west, so what is to prevent our mystery from continuing through the time to come as it has continued through the past?

"This little village, with its mere handful of inhabitants, is divided into two factions, the 'Yankees' comprising one, and the 'foreigners' the other division. The Yankees need no explanation, as they differ in no respect from the inhabitants of the many rural communities in New England; but the foreigners are truly a mystery. They are made up of a strange body of people of perhaps Spanish descent, there being now scarcely more than half a dozen all told, although, according to tradition, the time was when they constituted practically the entire population of this village. Where they originally came from nobody, aside from themselves, can tell; but they are credited with having been in this place many years. They have been ever a race by themselves, and in their own homes they speak a strange jargon which seems a mixture of the language of several of the Latin countries. Curiously enough, too, they have always acknowledged the leadership and government of a sort of chieftain, the present chief being Ferdinand Blannett, who succeeded his father, Peter.

"Ferdinand, who is a man past sixty, differs vastly from the other members of his class in that he is well educated and a great student. You will undoubtedly meet him if you remain here any length of time. He lives in a huge old house on the extreme edge of the township and with him, on

his large estate, live the other foreigners. The house, so says tradition, has been the residence of the chieftain of the band through many generations, and the building is old enough in appearance to bear out the statement. You will find Ferdinand Blannett, when you meet him, a most entertaining man and I feel certain that you will be delighted with his conversation.

"But you asked me about Tom Fenton. The Fentons, in some strange way which I cannot explain, were affiliated with the foreigners, although they lived in the village, and not on the Blannett estate. Fenton's father and Peter Blannett were right hand men to one another and you seldom saw one unless the other was near by. When Peter died there was great dissension among the foreigners, it being rumoured at the time that Peter had passed the leadership over to Fenton instead of to his son, Ferdinand. A bitter feud broke out and it looked for a time as though bloodshed would result; but such a catastrophe was prevented by the death of Fenton, which occurred rather mysteriously at an opportune moment.

"Shortly after his father's death, Tom Fenton removed from Lurie, taking with him his young son, and Ferdinand assumed the reins of government among the foreigners. But dissatisfaction was rampant, and, in the course of a few years,

the body, small even then, became depleted by removals from the district until there were left merely the half dozen or so who now remain on the estate. Of Tom Fenton, since his removal, I have heard little. That, gentlemen, is all that I can tell you concerning either Fenton or Blannett."

As the narration drew to a close Quincy and Gates stared wonderingly at each other across the table, Quincy being the first to break the brief silence which settled.

"What do they do, these foreigners, to earn their living?" he inquired.

"Oh, they work Blannett's farm, the income from which seems to be a sort of co-operative affair in which all share alike. As I told you, they are a mystery and their mode of life is as mysterious as their origin."

The doctor rose as if to close the conversation, thus cutting off the opportunity for further questioning. Quincy and Gates took their leave as rapidly as the demands of courtesy would allow, and, when once out of range of the doctor's house, paused in the middle of the road to consider their next step.

"This affair appears to grow more mixed and uncertain with every hour," Gates declared emphatically. "Where do all these different folks come in, anyhow? If Brown killed young Fenton,

who killed the old man? And, if Brown didn't kill the young fellow, who did? And why did Brown claim that pistol? Why did that fellow tackle me last night? What, if anything, has this man Blannett and his gang to do with it? The farther we go into this confounded thing, Sawyer, the more questions we dig up which absolutely require answers. I confess that I am all at sea, so, if you have any suggestion, by all means trot it out."

Quincy laughed in a puzzled and uncertain manner. "I think, Gates," he said, "that I begin to glimpse daylight, although I'll admit that it is merely an unsatisfactory glimmer, and one vastly complicated with peculiar possibilities. I suggest that we stroll out past Blannett's farm, and in that way secure an idea as to Fenton's former associates."

The trip to Blannett's farm entailed a much longer walk than they had anticipated, and the afternoon was well advanced before they reached it. Even then their object was not attained, as nowhere could they catch so much as a glimpse of either farmhouse or farm buildings. Nothing but wild and wooded land surrounded them on either side, not even a gate or opening of any sort being visible through the rough stone walls which enclosed the property. Unwilling to return to the village without having secured at least a distant view

of the farm buildings, they paused in the road and viewed the unbroken walls with indecision.

"Suppose," Gates suggested, "that we climb the hill over there and see if we can't catch a glimpse from its top."

They accordingly ascended the hill, emerging suddenly from the woods and underbrush to find themselves almost at the door of the great farm-house. No opportunity was given them in which to reconnoitre, however, for, without any warning, there suddenly burst from the rear of the house two giant mastiffs. The dogs charged them with deafening uproar, and wide open, slavering jaws, which presented anything other than an inviting appearance. After a brief but comprehensive glance in their direction, Quincy hastily pulled himself into the nearest tree, while Gates paused with seeming indecision, his hand fumbling nervously at his back pocket.

"Don't shoot! — Shin!" Quincy shouted from his place of refuge and Gates, hastily abandoning his plan of defence, "shinned" with alacrity.

The dogs, disappointed at the loss of their prey, leaped wildly about the tree in which the two men were perched, maintaining all the while a most fiendish din. The racket soon brought results, for the door of the house flew open, and a man carrying a heavy cane strode through into the yard.

From the description given by Doctor Barr the man was easily recognized as Ferdinand Blannett, his iron gray hair, bulky frame and alert activity rendering him a figure which would have been noticeable anywhere. He advanced with quick, snappy steps to the tree and stood gazing up, a slow smile of intense amusement passing over his face.

"My dogs appear to lack in hospitality, gentlemen," he said at last, speaking in a slow voice. "When, however, you take into consideration the fact that they seldom see strangers, you will readily understand that they have little opportunity for the practice of social amenities. Be gone!" he snapped in conclusion, at which the dogs slowly retreated, their eyes still fixed on the strangers as though in promise of additional hostilities when the opportunity should again be offered them. "Now, gentlemen," Blannett continued, "if you will descend I shall attempt to offer you better treatment than that which you have received from my dependents."

The invitation in itself seemed friendly enough; but there was that in the look and tone of Blannett which caused Quincy to glance at him with quick suspicion. The man's face was perfectly guileless, however, and he seemed actuated by nothing other than a courteous impulse; but, nevertheless, Quincy, for some reason he was unable to clearly define, determined to keep a close watch so long as

he and Gates should remain on the premises. Following a pace or two behind Blannett and Gates, as they walked toward the house, he was able to examine his host with minute care and was struck with the huge bulk of the man.

Towering above even the tall Gates, and with shoulders spreading to an unusual breadth, he was beyond all doubt a man who would prove a most formidable opponent in a purely physical contest. His muscles bulged in great knots and ropes beneath his soft shirt, where they slipped and slid sinuously like those of a cat, instead of stretching with the muscle-bound jerks which might have been expected in a man of his evident age. His step was unusually quick and light and the lithe swing of his body, which swayed gently from the waist with each stride, betokened that, in spite of its size, the great form would be capable upon occasion of surprising bursts of speed. In fact, Quincy decided, it seemed probable that, should Blannett ever become thoroughly aroused, both he and Gates, though powerful beyond the average as both were, would find themselves entirely at his mercy. At that point, however, his meditations were interrupted by their arrival at the door of Blannett's house.

"Step within, gentlemen," Blannett invited them with genuine courtesy. "You will find that my house is extremely old-fashioned, but I vastly pre-

fer the substantial qualities of the furniture of former days to the gaudy and fragile trappings of the modern age. Perhaps my size has influenced my preference," he added with a dry smile.

Accepting the invitation, Quincy's first glance assured him that Blannett had indeed spoken the truth. The room in which he found himself was truly furnished in the manner of past days; not only that, but the furniture was so patently antique that the eyes of a connoisseur would have burned with envy at sight of the collection. The deep shade of the mahogany, the graceful lines of the various pieces, and the air of serviceable strength which every article held forth, gave to the room a striking appearance of taste and comfort.

"You are a collector of antique furniture?" Quincy questioned, as Blannett led them toward what appeared to be his library and living-room.

"Oh, no," Blannett laughingly replied. "I am merely a preserver of antique furniture. These pieces have all been here since long previous to my time. Here in my library you will notice that the furniture is even more substantial than that which is in the dining-room. Will you be seated?"

As Quincy sank into a capacious chair he noted the truth of Blannett's statement; but, at the same time, his eye chanced to light on another item of the room's furnishing which brought an involun-

tary start of surprise. On a small table in one corner of the room rested a telephone. Noting Quincy's expression of astonishment, and its cause, Blannett again smiled in his peculiarly quiet and deliberate manner.

"Do you not think, sir, that we on the outskirts of civilization are entitled to at least a few of the conveniences of the world?" he questioned. "Do not be too greatly surprised at the presence of the telephone, for it belongs merely to a private line connected with various parts of my farm. I use it for the purpose of directing the farm work and for calling my men when I require their presence."

He settled back comfortably in his chair and, after passing cigars to his guests, produced a long-stemmed pipe which he lighted with evident relish.

"You are sightseers?" he inquired, carelessly.

Quincy fancied that he was able to detect a peculiar tone in the question, but gave no sign of his suspicions as he replied briefly in the affirmative. Blannett also refrained from mentioning the matter again, branching off almost immediately into conversation which pertained merely to the country in his immediate vicinity, and presenting them with many interesting facts during his discourse. From that point he cleverly led the conversation into

channels of learning and science, showing them in the course of his remarks occasional flashes of knowledge that fairly staggered them. So great was the range of his familiarity with almost every subject, that Quincy soon recognized that, instead of a rough provincial, he had to deal with a mind remarkably keen and well-stocked. For two hours or more they maintained an animated conversation before Blannett seemed suddenly to recall himself with a start.

"Why, gentlemen," he exclaimed. "It is really time for supper, or dinner as you would term the meal. It is so seldom that I entertain callers with whom I can converse on such subjects as we have taken up that the passage of time has entirely escaped me. If you will pardon me a few moments I shall give instructions for the serving of the meal." With an almost courtly bow he left them, and they heard his quick stride echoing through the farther rooms of the house.

No sooner had the sounds died away than Gates was at the door through which Blannett had disappeared. "It seems darned unmannerly to do it," he muttered, "but it's all in the day's work."

Quincy nodded briefly, and, with Gates on guard at the door, he began a hasty search of the room. The first article of furniture to attract his attention was a large, old-fashioned desk, to which he stepped

quickly. The desk, he had no doubt, was completely honeycombed with secret drawers, but he felt that he must rely on the strong possibility that Blannett, should he chance to have been guilty, would have relied on the safety of his isolation and become careless. He rapidly scanned drawer after drawer without discovering anything of greater importance than a vast accumulation of papers. He drew forth one signed "Ferdinand Blannett" and compared the handwriting with that of the note discovered in Fenton's suitcase, a slight smile of satisfaction appearing on his face as he did so. He dropped the paper back in the drawer, and was about to shove it back in place, when a small parcel wrapped in cloth struck his eye. He quickly lifted out the parcel and unwrapped it, an exclamation escaping him as he viewed the contents.

Wheeling about, he held up for the inspector's inspection two articles. One was an automatic pistol, and the other a curved-bladed Damascus dagger, and on the jewelled hilt of the dagger were several dark smears.

"We've got him!" Gates exclaimed, starting forward eagerly.

"Wait." Quincy halted him with upraised hand. "Get back in your chair and wait for him to come." With great care he placed the articles on the table where they would be most likely to attract the im-

mediate attention of any person entering the room, and then resumed his own seat.

They had not long to wait, for within a few moments Blannett's footsteps echoed in the next room and he once more stood before them.

"I think, gentlemen —" he began, pausing sharply in the midst of his words as his eyes encountered the mute evidence on the table. For a second only he stared at the articles and then, whirling abruptly, he seized the telephone.

Crack! The telephone, shattered by a heavy bullet, dropped from his hand and reeled drunkenly across the table, while Blannett himself leaped back and glared savagely at his guests.

"I don't miss in the daytime at any rate," Gates affirmed with grim satisfaction, resting the smoking barrel of his revolver on the arm of his chair, and keeping it in position for instant service. "Please be seated, Mr. Blannett."

With cool deliberation Blannett complied, his eyes flashing from one to the other of his guests, although his face at once resumed its usual expression of calm immobility.

"I take it, gentlemen," he observed quietly, "that you are sightseers of a professional nature."

"We are," Quincy avowed. "As much as I regret, Mr. Blannett, to reward hospitality with seem-

ing treachery, it has been necessary in this particular case."

Blannett made a gesture of dissent. "Do not reproach yourself on that score, sir," he remarked courteously. "I suspected who and what you were from the first. Francisco told me you were coming. Francisco," he added with dry humour, "is the man with whom one of you experienced a slight altercation last night."

He leaned forward in his chair and stared carelessly at Gates, who was now sitting with eyes narrowed and forehead slightly puckered as though in deep thought. His eyes then wandered slowly in Quincy's direction, as though to indicate that he awaited further questioning, but back of the quiet eyes there lay a cool determination, a flash of which Quincy caught as the head once more turned toward Gates. The inspector flicked the ashes from his cigar, a momentary relaxation of his faculties which brought immediate results.

Like a flash Blannett whipped a revolver from a hidden holster in the breast of his coat. The revolver leaped into position, and a triumphant smile played over his face, as the short, muscular finger closed over the trigger. But Quincy was awaiting the movement, and, even as Gates stared in petrified silence at the blue muzzle, there came a sharp crash and the revolver, torn out of Blan-

nett's hand, whirled away into a corner of the room.

"You will notice, Mr. Blannett," Quincy remarked coolly, "that we are both fair shots, and quick shots as well."

After an instant of startled astonishment, Blannett tossed his hands in the air with a gesture of complete surrender.

"I give it up, gentlemen," he remarked, with no trace of quiver or fear in his voice. "You are too many for me."

Quincy maintained his position with revolver trained and, at a nod from him, Gates quickly ran over Blannett's person in search of other arms. In a moment he again resumed his seat with a shake of his head.

"There are no more," he stated briefly.

"Very well," said Quincy, lowering his own revolver. "You are, of course, aware of our purpose here, Mr. Blannett."

"I am. You have come here in search of the man who killed Tom Fenton." He paused a moment, and then continued with emphatic deliberation. "I killed him. Had not my plans miscarried somewhat through the overzealousness of my assistant, I doubt if you would have been able to trace me so readily; but perhaps it would have been possible. I did not count, when I left you,

on your possessing the nerve to search my room during my brief absence, which is where I made another mistake. Had the faintest inkling of your intention been given me, I assure you that your task would have been rendered far more difficult. However, I cannot make up my mind that I am sorry to have the matter turn out in this way. I am, after the teaching of my forebears, a fatalist, and, according to my belief, of course, this event has been foreordained since the ages began. My life has been passed after a manner different from the usual run, different by far from that of any man you ever knew, and it is possible that my ideals are sadly warped, but who can say? As you view my deed, the killing of Fenton was vile murder; but, according to my view, it was not only justifiable, but laudable as well. It is all a matter of viewpoint, you see. I am going to tell you a strange story and afterward, I have no doubt, show you a strange sight. Then you will understand the weird peculiarities under which my life has been passed, and the lives of others before me."

As he paused a moment, Quincy again broke in. "Francisco. Where is he?"

Blannett's slow smile crossed his face. "Francisco you will never catch. He is already far away across the Canadian line and he is well supplied with money." He quietly filled his long-stemmed

pipe before continuing, and did not speak again until the tobacco was burning to his satisfaction.

"The story I am about to tell you," he continued at last, "is a peculiar mixture of antiquity and modernity, and must therefore be handled in two short sections. The first begins at a time about a century and a quarter ago when my ancestor, Hugo Blannett, plied his profession of piracy along the South Atlantic coast of this country, and the northern sections of South America. Had he lived in these days he would perhaps have made as successful a business man as he was a pirate, although it is possible that a quiet business life would not have appealed to a man of his active nature. He had a settlement of his own on the western coast of Florida where, so our traditions tell us, he and many of his men kept wives and families, going to and from their work as did the more peaceful sailors of the time. His command was made up largely of Spaniards, with a sprinkling of Italians and a few Englishmen, one of the last named being his lieutenant, a man called Black Fenton.

"At a time shortly before the Revolution, however, the band, partly because of the manner in which they were being harried by British warships, and partly on account of the increasing age of Hugo Blannett, for they would follow no other leader, de-

cided to give up their calling and sail away to Spain, where the immense fortune they had reaped would enable all to live in a most luxurious manner during the remainder of their lives. Therefore, they abandoned their colony, packed their spoils, consisting of gold bullion and jewels, on board a large ship which they had captured for the purpose, and set sail for Spain. But misfortune attended them from the start, coming first in the form of a gale which blew their ship far out of its course and to the northward.

"For days the ship struggled along through heavy seas, far out of its course, and badly damaged by heavy seas. At last, when the wind had somewhat abated, they found themselves in a seriously crippled condition off the coast of one of the Northern States. Then, to make matters worse, they were sighted by a British frigate, which immediately gave chase to them and, had it not been for the fact that the frigate was also badly crippled by the recent storm, the result would have been disastrous. As it was, they had no opportunity to set their course; but were obliged to flee on up the coast, the frigate following them all day. As night was falling, they sighted a small river and ran up it, the frigate following, but being forced to proceed more slowly because of her greater draught. At last the frigate gave up the chase for the night and

dropped anchor, well knowing that the pirates were bottled up in the river and could not get out past the frigate. But Blannett had no intention of yielding to a pirate's fate even yet, and he fled up the river until the lights of a small settlement gleamed far ahead. Then the pirates paused for a council of war.

"As the result of the discussion the men of the party silently landed at a point below the settlement and, advancing under cover of the darkness, fell upon the settlers and massacred them. They then took possession of all the horses and wagons to be found, and there were many of them, and, being used to quick work, they rapidly disembarked their party from the ship, loaded their valuables on the wagons and set off across the country in search of a spot where they would be safe until an opportunity should be given them in which to secure another ship and again set sail.

"For days they moved inland until they finally discovered this place which, located as it is in the heart of the mountains, offered them a shelter such as they desired. They immediately erected temporary shelters, expecting that soon they would be able to be off once more to the sea, but misfortune still attended them. The Revolution broke out just at that time, with the result that, for years, the seas swarmed with British war-

ships and Yankee privateers, completely shattering between them the hopes of Blannett's little band of pirates.

" Blannett, quick to see the predicament in which they were placed, at once began to put up houses of a more durable nature than their first shelters and to prepare for a long wait. This very house was the one built for him. For a time all went well, the men of the party securing sustenance for all by frequent forays into the lower countryside, where they harried Whig and Tory alike, after the manner of guerrillas of the more Southern States. Soon, however, dissension broke out among them, one faction, under Black Fenton, desiring that the treasure be divided and the band allowed to split up according to the desires of its members, while Blannett counselled the carrying through of the original plans.

" The controversy waxed hotter and hotter until Blannett suddenly settled the whole matter by causing the treasure to be spirited away and hidden, nobody knew where. He then announced that, so long as the war lasted, the treasure would remain hidden and that, should he die before the close of the war, an event not unlikely, the wearer of his belt was to succeed him and would, when the time became ripe, produce the treasure and lead them away. From necessity his edict was accepted and

when, a few months later, he died, his son, Hugo, succeeded him.

"But the old pirate had either builded more strongly than he knew, or had overlooked the fact that he was better educated than his fellows, for nobody, not even his son, was able to interpret the directions he left for the discovery of the treasure. They searched wildly for years, but without success until, at last abandoning hope, they settled down to wait until accident or some unforeseen circumstance should divulge the hiding place.

"Years passed and the original members of the band passed on after their fallen leader. Another generation followed the first, and another; but still there was no key to their secret, save the unintelligible directions which Blannett had left. The country about them began to be built up, and the little village of Lurie was founded. A century passed away and the descendants of those same pirates were still here, the story of the hidden treasure having been passed on from generation to generation. Even so you find them today, a little group of unknown foreigners, despite their birth in this land; little known to their neighbours, and recognizing no ruling authority save that of their own chieftain. That, gentlemen, completes the ancient history of our body. We shall now descend to modern times.

"It is an utter impossibility to completely isolate a given body of people through unlimited time, especially in restless America, no matter how powerful may be the bonds which hold them together. This fact became strongly evidenced at about the time when my father assumed the leadership of the band. From the time when our people first took up their residence here the different families intermarried with one another, for, as I told you, many of the men had families in their far-off Florida settlement, and, of course, they brought their women with them when they came away. Some few of the men, in the earlier days, married women of this country after it became decided that they were to remain here indefinitely, and the descendants of those unions were the first to be seized with the spirit of unrest. The men were free to depart whenever they desired to do so, but it was a law of the settlement that whoever departed forfeited all rights to any share in the treasure when it should be discovered. For a time that fact acted as a deterrent to emigration, but at length the treasure became more and more a tradition and less a reality to the people, so that emigrations became more frequent.

"Fully realizing that, unless the treasure should be soon discovered, there would be nobody left to claim it, my father devoted his life to a thorough

search of the land. He nearly pulled the old house to pieces, but without success, and at last he was forced to give up his search and attempt to study the matter out. He knew that the original Blannett had been far better educated than any other member of the organization, either during his own time or since. Therefore, my father argued, the most likely way in which to solve the problem was to educate some member of the band up to, or beyond, the point to which Hugo Blannett had attained. Thus the man trained for the purpose might be able to grasp hidden meanings which Blannett had placed beyond the reach of the ordinary member of the band.

"He settled on me for the experiment and, from my earliest boyhood, I was trained and taught with the utmost care, a tutor being imported for me until I had reached a stage that permitted my entrance to college. Then I was sent away and during the six years that followed I completed not only the regular course, but a postgraduate course as well. I enjoyed learning, and plunged fervently into the task which had been set for me, but, even after my return from college, I was unable to solve the great problem. Still, neither my father nor I despaired. Instead, I imported books and set out to pursue subjects which I had not hitherto undertaken, determined that eventually I should read the great riddle.

Daily I examined the directions which Blannett had left, and which I shall show you later, but I could make nothing of them because of a strange break in the lines.

"Years passed and my father died, turning over to me on his deathbed his belt of leadership, and with that belt came the greatest catastrophe our little community ever suffered. For Andrew Fenton, Black Fenton's descendant, influenced, I have no doubt, by his son, Tom, contested my right to the leadership. He stirred up dissension among our members, all those who were of mixed foreign and Yankee blood — and most of them were, by that time — taking sides with him, while the few straight descendants stood by me. For a time it looked as though bloodshed would follow; but, without any warning, Andrew Fenton suddenly died. What caused his death I do not know, but I have always believed that he was murdered by his son, Tom, who believed that the dissension had reached a point where he alone could lead the rebels to victory. But in that he was mistaken. At the death of Andrew the dissenters fell suddenly back from their warlike attitude and turned, instead, to emigration, so that, inside of two months, our land was deserted save for Tom Fenton, his son, and the few men who are now to be found on the estate.

"For a time Tom lived on in his village house, but at last he, too, disappeared, and with him went my golden belt of leadership, stolen I never knew how.

"I was wild with rage for a day or two and, could I have followed Fenton or had I known his destination, I would have killed him. It may seem like a trivial occurrence to you, but remember that I had been taught from earliest childhood to revere that belt as a king reveres his crown, and a king cannot be lightly robbed of his crown. Then, perhaps as the result of my life among outsiders, my education or what-not, I regained control of myself and allowed Fenton to remain in possession of the belt; but I still kept watch over him, and knew always where he was to be found. I settled quietly back with my little handful of followers and resumed my study of the great problem. Years passed in this manner and then, gentlemen, I solved it!"

With the words, he leaped to his feet and paced excitedly back and forth across the room, his eyes blazing and his mane of gray hair flying.

"I solved the problem, and I knew that I must have that belt. Not only that, but I realized why the belt had been designated as the seal of authority and leadership. I believe Fenton suspected as much when he took it, although I do not believe that he

understood the exact part which the belt played in the mystery. This happened weeks ago, and I at once sent to Fenton demanding the belt. He returned a sneering reply and invited me to come and take it. I sent once more, and demanded an interview on neutral territory, little thinking that it would be granted. Back came a reply, signed by Edgar, to the effect that he would meet me at a certain spot which he described in the village of Yokum.

"I asked nothing better than to get them separated, for then I knew that I would have the belt sooner or later. I answered the note, accepting the appointment and signing the initials of Hugo Blannett, as was always our custom in the transaction of official business. At the time appointed, I sent Francisco to Yokum to meet Edgar, while I went on to Boston. I was unfortunate, however, because Fenton was not at home and, although I waited in the vicinity until after Edgar had returned, he did not put in an appearance.

"I then returned here and again demanded an interview, which was granted me for the night on which the events you are interested in occurred. Once more I sent Francisco to Yokum; but on this occasion the poor faithful fellow bungled. Edgar, it seems, must have scented danger, for he approached the meeting place with an automatic pistol

clutched in his hand, a fact which both frightened and enraged Francisco. Without pausing to consider his deed, he caught up a club and struck Edgar down, the blow proving fatal. Francisco then acted on the instinct which has descended to him through the generations succeeding the pirates. He buried the body, as was always done in former times when a member of the band was killed in any way. It was instinct, gentlemen, and nothing else which prompted such an act.

"In the meantime I had placed myself outside Fenton's house in Boston. Fenton did not return until early in the morning, and I watched him enter the house and then waited until I saw a light on the first floor. I crept around the building and, by peering through a window, discovered Fenton seated at a table in his library. I softly raised the window and appeared before him. Was he frightened? He most assuredly was not!

"I leaned over the table and demanded my belt and he, with an oath, defied me to take it. I could have crushed him in my bare hands, but I scorned to overpower him without giving him at least a chance for his life, so I ordered him to produce some weapons and fight. A light of actual happiness seemed to come into his eyes as he leaped to his feet and drew those old Damascus daggers, that had once been the property of Hugo Blannett, from a

drawer. He tossed them on the table and invited me to choose. We immediately caught up our daggers, stepped back into the clearest portion of the room and fought, the fight lasting only a few seconds. There is no need of my recounting the details. Suffice it to say that I killed him. I then tossed his dagger on the table, took the belt and the other dagger and escaped. I had not counted on Francisco's returning with the pistol and belt belonging to Edgar, nor had I counted on the fact of his discovering that two detectives were on my trail. He waited in Boston until long after my departure in order to watch developments and, boarding the same train with yourselves, he suspected you. He entered your rooms to discover whether or not you were wearing badges, so that he might warn me if you seemed dangerous.

"The remainder of the story you well know, without my repeating it. Francisco is well out of your way for, as soon as I received his news, I sent him out of the country, feeling that perhaps it was Francisco and not myself you were tracking. I have only a mere handful of followers, gentlemen, but they are loyal. Ah, what would they not do if they had the faintest inkling of the position in which their chief is placed! Do not be alarmed, for I could have summoned them long ago had I so desired. But what is the use? Why make them

all fugitives from justice, when no possible good can come from so doing?"

He paused for a brief interval and stared silently at the dagger lying on the table, then resumed his rapid pacing of the room. As he walked, his step seemed to become even more springy and catlike, while his eyes burned with a yet wilder light.

"Gentlemen!" he exclaimed, coming to a sudden halt, "by teaching and study I am not only a fatalist, but also a believer in reincarnation. What other explanation is there for the act of Francisco, when he paused in his flight to bury the body of Edgar Fenton, when the body would plainly have been better left above ground? Was not that an indication of the reincarnated member of old Blannett's band? Witness again his fierce attack at the hotel, when once more flight would have better served his purpose! Witness, in Fenton, the staid business man reverting to a hand-to-hand conflict with the weapons of his forefathers! Can it be that he was the reincarnation of the original Black Fenton? Why not?

"Look at myself. According to tradition I have not only the exact build, but also the features and mind of Hugo Blannett. Can it be possible that Hugo Blannett so cleverly hid his secret of the treasure that only his own reincarnated mind could rediscover it? Am I the reincarnation of Hugo

Blannett, and are my few loyal followers the reincarnated men of my original crew, with Black Fenton contesting my authority today as he did two centuries ago? As truly as I stand here before you, I believe that these things are true!"

As he finished speaking, he paused abruptly and stood facing them, his eyes glaring defiance, his mane of hair thrown back from his forehead and his breast heaving convulsively. He looked every inch the storied buccaneer and, at the moment, it is probable that neither Quincy nor Gates, so strongly were they held in the spell of his personality, would have felt the least surprise had the room suddenly changed to a sea-washed deck, and they had found themselves with the Jolly Roger floating overhead, and Blannett's wild horde pressing them from all sides. It was Blannett himself who snapped the spell, however. Relapsing from his attitude of wild challenge to an air almost of dejection, he resumed his seat.

When he next spoke it was in his former quiet tone. "You have now heard the story down to the present day, and soon we three will investigate its long sought explanation, and then will come the last scene of the drama which had its first act staged when my ancestor, or perhaps it was my former self, hid the pirates' treasure."

He opened a secret drawer in the table and drew

from it a small square of parchment, worn with much handling and inscribed with ink that had long since turned brown with age. "Here," he said, "we have a portion of the combination which will unlock the mystery. You, being accustomed to piecing together strange clues until they form a logical whole, may be able to quickly work out a solution to this problem, especially as I have provided you with several valuable hints. Attempt it," he concluded, placing the parchment in Quincy's hands.

Quincy bent over the parchment, while Gates hung interestedly at his elbow. The parchment was covered with written directions, the wording being in Spanish, with the exception of what appeared to be a single word, the characters of which stood out from the sheet in an almost defiant challenge. The directions, in so far as he was able to translate them, Quincy found to read: "From the corner ——. Then, after entering, press the middle of the smallest stone in the short passage. When the door swings open, press the square stone in the right hand corner of the floor. Hugo Blannett."

Quincy puzzled long and earnestly over the strange scroll before finally looking toward Blannett with an expression of acknowledged failure on his face. "If I had sufficient time," he said, "I

believe I could solve it. The key, of course, lies in the Hebrew characters, which I am unable to read."

Blannett nodded gravely. "Do not be too greatly cast down," he remarked, "over failing to do in a few minutes what it has cost over a century of hard work to accomplish. Those Hebrew characters are, as you say, the key to the situation, but in them the key is doubly disguised. The word they spell is not a Hebrew word, but is rather the simple English word 'belt.' Do you now understand? You are referred to the belt for the missing and most important section of the directions. Now let us examine the belt itself."

From the same secret drawer he drew forth the belt on which the entire story had so strangely hinged. It was a heavy belt of yellowish leather, but its most striking characteristic lay in the big golden buckle with which it was adorned, and in the large gold chains which ran back from the buckle and completely encircled it. On the otherwise smooth surface of the buckle could readily be traced a series of strange words, engraved in the same Hebrew characters which had already played so important a part in the directions left by the ancient pirate.

"Here we now have the complete key," Blannett informed them, laying the belt on the table

and freely translating the words inscribed on the buckle. "The words are: 'Nearest the stairway of the main vault count five stones. Dig the mortar from the farthest corner of the fifth stone and pull the knob you will discover.' That, gentlemen, is the secret of the golden belt and in its solution we have the complete key to Blannett's treasure chamber. How he first arranged his hiding place, and then preserved the secret of it, we shall probably never know; but we shall know the nature of the hiding place and the contents of it. I had not been able to explore the mysteries of the place previous to your coming, and that experience we shall now be able to share with one another. Shall we now explore the mystery of the main vault?"

The assent of his guests coming immediately on the heels of his proposition, Blannett arose and silently motioned them to follow him. He led the way out through the dining-room, where they had first viewed the interior of the house, and back through numerous rooms of varying size, until they found themselves in what was undoubtedly the kitchen. There he paused a few minutes while he rummaged about in a dark closet, reappearing shortly with two lighted lanterns and a small hatchet. He handed one of the lanterns to Gates, the hatchet to Quincy, and, carrying the second lantern himself, turned to a large oaken door which

he flung open, disclosing a flight of rough stone steps leading downward.

"The main vault referred to in the directions lies below us," he informed them briefly.

Without awaiting either question or comment, he stepped through the door and slowly descended the stairs, his two companions crowding close on his heels. For perhaps twenty steps the stairs led downward and at their foot the trio found themselves in a large stone cellar of tremendous dimensions, the flickering lanterns throwing their light barely to the farthest walls. Blannett at once turned sharply to the left and led the way to a dark corner, from where he proceeded to count five stones, his task rendered easy by the fact that the stones stood upright, the sides of each reaching from top to bottom of the cellar wall. At the corner designated he paused and rested his lantern so that the light reflected squarely on the stone.

"Dig there," he commanded, turning to Quincy.

Without a moment's hesitation Quincy sank on one knee and industriously hacked at the mortar which, rendered soft by age, easily crumbled away beneath the strokes of his hatchet. As he chopped he realized that the particular corner which he was attacking had been chinked with an unusual quantity of mortar, a fact which gave promise of a large cavity behind. Slowly the mortar fell away until

his ears were at last greeted by the sharp clank of steel on steel. Proceeding then more gingerly, he carefully dug away the remaining particles of mortar and was at last able to see in the dim lantern light a round steel knob protruding from what seemed to be the solid stone backing of the hole. He reached in, seized the knob and pulled sharply. Instantly the great stone before him swung noiselessly on invisible pivots, and disclosed a short corridor of dimensions sufficient for the passage of a man.

Blannett unhesitatingly stepped through the opening, followed by Quincy and Gates, both of whom were deeply stirred by a rising sense of excitement. The eyes of all were turned instantly to the search for the smallest stone in the passage, but it was Quincy who discovered it, and who followed the next step in the directions by pressing firmly against its centre. Again they witnessed the phenomenon of a seemingly solid stone turning automatically and silently. Another passage opened before them, and again they crowded through; but on this occasion they paused abruptly when just within the opening and stared aghast at the spectacle which was presented to their gaze.

The floor of the small subterranean chamber was littered with human bones, intermingled here and there with a rusted weapon or a tattered bit of

cloth, which had evidently once been portions of the arms and clothing of members of Blannett's band.

"God!" exclaimed Gates, starting back involuntarily and seizing Quincy's arm in a crushing grasp. The grip at any other time would have brought a grimace of pain; but, under the excitement and strain of the moment, Quincy paid it no more heed than he would have accorded to the weight of a feather. Blannett alone seemed unmoved by the spectacle and turned toward them smiling grimly.

"What do you make of this?" he inquired, his gaze fixed on Quincy's face.

"I think," Quincy replied slowly, "that we have discovered the reason why Blannett's secret never became known. He could not have arranged this hiding place alone and have conveyed the treasure to it. He needed and procured help for the work, but he most effectually silenced their tongues when the work had been completed."

Blannett had been poking carelessly amid the litter and, as Quincy finished, he straightened up, holding in his hand a gold-mounted pistol. "I agree with you," he said, nodding his head slowly. "I believe — What is this?" He broke off abruptly and stood staring fixedly at the pistol. "Our traditions never hinted at this possibility. Look here." He extended the pistol to Quincy.

Quincy automatically took the weapon and stared at the spot on which Blannett's eyes had been fixed. There, standing out dimly in the lantern light, he read the single word "Fenton." His eyes wonderingly sought Blannett's, only to be met by a shrug and a cool shake of the head.

"It is evident that Black Fenton's insurrection ended with the disappearance of the treasure," he remarked coolly. "It is perfectly plain that what took place here was for the purpose you mentioned. Look at the bones. There are but four skulls among them, and therefore it is certain that only four men met their deaths here. How Fenton chanced to be among them I suppose we must leave to conjecture. Whether he was chosen to assist in the disposal of the treasure, which seems decidedly unlikely, or whether he accidentally stumbled on the hiding place at the moment of the work's completion we cannot say. We can guess what happened here; but we shall never know for a certainty. Suffice it that these men met their deaths as the toll of secrecy. Now let us proceed with our own affair."

He strode to the right hand corner of the room, unceremoniously scraped away the bones and debris which blocked his passage, and pressed his foot on the square stone. At once a section of the floor dropped away from almost under his feet, carrying down a quantity of bones and revealing a stairway.

Blannett descended half-way and carelessly tossed the bones out upon the floor of the room.

"By all the devils," Gates muttered beneath his breath, "I believe he told the truth when he said that he was the reincarnation of that old pirate. Shall we follow him, Sawyer? What is to prevent him from playing a trick on us like the other fellow played on these poor chaps? We never would be found until he had his next round of life, a couple of centuries in the future, and led some other poor suckers here."

"Then keep your hand on your gun," Quincy whispered, dropping into the hole after his wild guide.

"I'll keep my hand on it all right," Gates growled, as he drew his revolver from its accustomed pocket and followed gingerly in the rear of his companions. "And, if that chap tries anything on, he's a dead pirate."

The passage in which they found themselves proceeded in a straight line for a distance of about ten feet before swinging abruptly to the right and entering a low-studded chamber, which seemed to be in reality a sort of sub-cellar beneath the great vault into which they had first descended. As they approached they perceived that the chamber was well filled with merchandise of some sort, but it was not until they were well within that the real nature

of their discovery appeared to them. Then, as the light from the lanterns filled the place, they stared in wild-eyed amazement.

Tier on tier, along one side of the chamber, were piled solid gold bars which caught the light from the lanterns and flashed it back at them in soft yellow rays. Nor did the mass of bullion complete the wonders of this veritable Aladdin's cave, for, piled indiscriminately in a corner, were many gems and jewels, some unset and others still in the rings, necklaces or weapons which had originally contained them. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in gold and jewels lay spread about the three investigators, and it is scarce to be wondered at that their breath came in quick gasps and their eyes bulged with wonder. It was not until Blannett's cool voice broke the stillness that the two detectives were able to recall themselves to earth.

"You have seen what is before you, gentlemen," were his words. "Nobody knows of this place but we three. Can you forget your quest, and my existence, if I offer you the entire treasure?"

For a moment the two were unable to regain their senses, but almost immediately Quincy shook his head with violent determination. It was Gates, however, who spoke.

"I have always been a poor man," he said slowly, "and I have always worked for every cent I have

possessed; but I have lived square and, by God! I shall die square. I cannot be bought off."

A look of admiration spread over Blannett's face, and his head was flung back in pride of race.

"You are men!" he cried. "Men! Had you accepted my offer I swear by all that's holy you would never have left this place alive. In your eyes, and in the eyes of the law, I am a criminal, a murderer; but in my own soul I feel that I have done no wrong. Be that as it may, however, for I have but a short time in which to call myself a free man, and as such I make a final request of you. This treasure can never be returned to its original owners, nor can the descendants of those owners ever be located. Their claim is outlawed, anyway. Therefore it belongs to my men, to my handful of faithful followers, and I want your promise that you will do all in your power to enable them to get it. Do you promise?"

Silently the two nodded, too much overcome by amazement to be really aware of what they were promising, or why. At the sign Blannett stooped suddenly and caught up at random two jewelled daggers from the floor, placing them in the hands of the detectives.

"Take these as a small token of my regard," he said with dignity. For a moment afterward he paused, his eyes wandering silently over them and

then, suddenly and without any warning, he sprang full on Gates. Whirling the inspector back as though he had been nothing but a child, Blannett's great hand closed on the revolver and jerked it into his own grasp.

Quincy sprang sharply to one side, his own revolver in his hand; but only to find himself desperately handicapped. The revolver in Blannett's hand was centred on Quincy's head with immovable steadiness, while Gates' body, used as a shield, made a shot by Quincy hazardous in the extreme. For a few seconds the tableau was maintained, with Quincy and Blannett glaring at each other over their revolvers, neither caring to precipitate hostilities by a shot. At last Blannett, the savage light in his eyes diminishing slightly, spoke in his cool even tones.

"I have the drop on you, Mr. Sawyer. Throw down your revolver."

There being no other course open to him, Quincy did so, standing erect after the pistol had clattered to the stone floor and staring quietly into Blannett's face. Another brief interval of silence followed and then Blannett spoke once more.

"Stand where you are and no harm will come to you! I am willing to kill in fair fight, but I am no murderer! I am a free man! My fathers were free men before me! They fought and they died

with laughter on their lips, and their blood still flows in my veins! I have your promise to see that my people get what is theirs and I trust you! Now, good-bye!"

His final words rang out proudly as he hurled the helpless Gates from him, turned the revolver against his own temple and pulled the trigger. The report, muffled by the proximity of the revolver to his head, sounded dully in the close chamber as he sank quietly to the floor.

For several seconds Quincy did not stir, his muscles rendered motionless by the deed which he had seen enacted. Then, as Gates crawled from the corner into which he had been flung, Quincy's eyes rested automatically on the dagger in his hands. "H. B." he muttered dully, reading the engraved initials. "There must have been several of these."

Gates arose and grimly eyed the silent figure on the floor. "Well, Sawyer," he muttered thickly, "I guess this case is settled." For a moment he paused and then added, "But where do you suppose Henry Brown came in?"

"He didn't come in," Quincy replied briefly.

"But what of that pistol? Blannett had a pistol which he said was young Fenton's, and Brown said the one we found there was his. What do you make of it?"

"I make just this," Quincy replied. "There is one fact which we are prone to overlook in this business. That is, that sometimes some men really do tell the truth."

III

THE AFFAIR OF UNREACHABLE ISLAND

INSPECTOR GATES poked his head through the doorway of Quincy's office and watched the latter scowlingly endeavour to unravel the kinks in the legal phraseology of an official-looking document. For several seconds he held his position before Quincy became aware of his presence. Then, glancing hastily up, Quincy greeted him with his accustomed grin.

"Hello, Gates," he called. "Come in and tell me the news."

Gates entered and, holding the door open with one hand, beckoned for some unseen companion to follow him. "I have here, Sawyer," he said, "a gentleman from out of the state who brings with him an interesting case. I can't touch it, of course, so I am introducing him to you."

As the stranger entered Quincy hastily inventoried his appearance. The man was patently from the rural districts, his clothes being of that nondescript pattern which serves the countryman as a "best suit" through years of "Sunday services," fune-

rals and similar dress occasions in the outlying communities. The perfect neatness of every article of clothing, however, together with the dark blue colouring, indicated that the man was a careful dresser, according to his own tastes, and that prevailing styles meant little to him. The cut of the clothes and a certain air of subconscious authority which appeared in the stranger's manner caused Quincy almost immediately to set him down as a seaman, probably an officer, and this conclusion Gates promptly verified.

"This is Captain Zebedee Orcutt," Gates proceeded with the introduction, "and he desires to secure your services, Sawyer."

The stranger smilingly acknowledged the introduction and accepted the chair which Quincy pushed forward. Seating himself, his face almost at once assumed a graver expression and for a few seconds he stared reflectively at Quincy, unconsciously smoothing with one hand his shaggy bush of white whiskers as he did so. As he prepared to speak again the pleasant little lines which netted his face changed into an expression of troubled concern.

"Yes, my name is Orcutt," he commenced, speaking rapidly, as though anxious to get the affair out of his own hands and into others more capable of taking charge of it. "I hail from York

Village, Maine, where I have lived all my life and where I am known to everybody. This story concerns my daughter, Eleanor, and I want help right away because I have reason to believe that she is in grave danger. The story is a queer one, and I hardly know how to begin it." He paused briefly, as though collecting his thoughts, while Quincy waited with patient courtesy for him to continue.

"My daughter," and at the words a note of pride crept into his voice, "is really a very beautiful girl, one of the handsomest I have ever seen, and I've been in every civilized country on the globe. She is now twenty years old, and the trouble I am going to tell you about originated two years ago. At that time she was engaged to a young fellow in Portsmouth, a man of whom everybody spoke in the highest of terms. Everything went fine with them, and she was as happy as a clam at high tide, up to a week before the day when the wedding was to have taken place.

"Then the young fellow, Harrison his name was, came up from Portsmouth to take out the marriage license. He stayed with Eleanor all day and they, with her mother and me, put in most of the time talking over plans for the wedding. She had always lived in York, and, as everybody in town is acquainted with everybody else, she wanted a church

wedding so all the neighbours could be invited. Of course that took a lot of planning, as there has to be more fuss on the day a girl is married than there is during all the rest of her life.

"Young Harrison stayed to supper and they talked during the early part of the evening. Then he took his hired rig and set out to drive to Kittery, from where he would cross to Portsmouth. That was the last we ever saw of him alive, for his horse turned up that night alone at the livery stable where it had been hired, and it was three days later that we found Harrison's body wedged between two rocks off Cat Point. The back of his head had been crushed in by a blow and his body thrown in the water. It may have drifted around with the tide a day or two before it finally lodged in the rocks.

"Of course we hunted for the murderer, but county sheriffs and town constables can't seem to do work like that successfully. They are all right in cases where physical courage is needed; but I guess they don't get enough practice in the fancy lines of their business to make them experts at it. At any rate, we never found any trace of the man who killed Harrison.

"Eleanor was completely prostrated by the occurrence and it was a year before she fully recovered and once more appeared like her former self.

Then another young fellow, Oscar Silsby from Kittery, fell in love with her. She was naturally a bit stand-offish for a time, as she had not forgotten young Harrison; but I guess it is one of the first laws of nature for young folks to fall in love with each other, and so it wasn't long before she came to me and told me that she was engaged to Silsby.

"They were to have been married a week ago yesterday, and Silsby had moved his things up from Kittery because I had conditioned that they live with us a year. You see, her mother and I kind of wanted to get used to losing our daughter gradually, and we couldn't seem to spare her all at once. After moving his things up he went back to Kittery to make some final arrangements of his business affairs, and was intending to drive back that evening in time for the wedding. This wedding was to have been a private affair at the house, with a reception to the neighbours afterward, and there wern't so many heavy arrangements as there had been for the first one.

"Everything was ready that night, with the parson present and the few invited guests on hand, but for some reason Silsby wasn't on time. We waited for half an hour beyond the time set for the wedding, and then Eleanor went into hysterics, fearing that Silsby had met the same fate as had young

Harrison, and the wedding guests were formed into a hastily-organized searching party.

"We went down the road in the direction of Kittery and, about a mile from the house, we found his horse and buggy, the horse badly lamed, standing at the side of the road. There were no blood-stains nor signs of violence that we could see, and neither was there any sign of Silsby. We searched all night, but discovered nothing, and it was not until nearly noon of the next day that I accidentally discovered his whereabouts.

"I had been down along the beach toward Kittery, because the tide runs so strong near my place that nothing is ever washed ashore. I had stayed on the beach until the tide turned, looking with my ships' glasses for his body, but had found no trace of it. On my way back home I happened to glance toward Unreachable Island, which lies well up toward the York shore, and I caught a glimpse of something lying on the island's beach well in toward where the sand runs into grass land. I trained my glasses on it, and sure enough it was a man. It is impossible to reach the island from the landward side, so I ran back to Kittery and hired a tug.

"We went to the island and found Oscar lying there bound hand and foot and unconscious. We rushed him to York and into the nearest doctor's

office, where he was revived with much difficulty. But even then he was unable to tell us much about his recent experience.

"He said that the night previous had been very dark and that, on his way to York, he had left the work of keeping in the road largely to his horse's instinct. Perhaps it was not altogether instinct, for the horse had travelled the road so many times that he must have known every foot of it by daylight or dark. It may be that it would have been better if the horse had not been so familiar with the way, for the certainty of his footing caused him to trot, and the first thing that Oscar knew the horse had stumbled and fallen. Then, as Oscar jumped from the buggy to raise the horse, something, he thinks it must have been a man's fist, struck him a regular knock-out blow, and he became unconscious, not regaining his senses again until he was revived in the doctor's office."

"Pardon me a moment," Quincy broke in. "Did the doctor say that the man bore any indications of having been drugged?"

"He didn't say," the captain responded slowly.

"Very well, then. Proceed with your story. It seems hard to believe, however, that a man merely knocked out by some person's fist should have remained unconscious during all that period of time."

"Well," the captain continued, "the whole affair is a strange mystery. No clue was found at the place where the assault was committed, except for a piece of heavy fish line which had been tied across the road to trip the horse. The line is worthless as a clue because lines exactly like it may be found in every fisherman's outfit from Bath to Gloucester. The whole affair is so strange, and I have become so frightened for my daughter, that I have come here to get what assistance I can. Now, if you can help me, for God's sake do."

The captain finished his narrative and leaned back, looking from one to the other of his hearers with an expression of hopeless bewilderment on his face. Quincy spoke after a brief pause.

"Captain Orcutt," he said, "I am wondering concerning that island. In my experience I have found that all those little islands off your coast have been named with descriptive phrases. Does 'Unreachable' signify that the island cannot be reached except in a tug?"

"The term is purely a nautical one," the captain informed him. "You see the term 'reach' means to sail abeam, or at right angles to the way in which the wind blows. To get to the island a boat could not sail abeam, or reach, on account of the swift tide, and, as the strip of water is sheltered on the landward side, it would be impossible to sail in any

other way. A small boat such as a dory would be carried away like a chip if it attempted to cross. In regard to this particular instance, however, there is a way, unknown to me, by which the island may be reached at low tide over a series of stepping stones which lie about two feet under water at that time. I have never crossed them, nor have they ever been crossed, to my knowledge, except by one man." As the captain paused in his story the muscles of his jaws hardened perceptibly.

"Then you suspect somebody," Quincy broke in hastily.

"Yes, I do; but the strange part of the business is that if the man whom I suspect is guilty of this attempt it will leave the other affair as deep a mystery as ever, for I do not think he could have been connected with both. I may be wrong in this; but for some reason I have formed a firm opinion that these affairs are connected with each other.

"The man whom I suspect in this case is Benjamin Silsby, Oscar's brother. You must understand that it would take a powerful man to carry a senseless body across those stones, and such a man Benjamin is. Furthermore, he is the only man I know of who has ever crossed those stones. What is still more to the point is the fact that he had the motive for the crime, and I believe the motive is what you detectives always look for.

When the father of the two boys died, he left a tidy little house and a fair amount of money. The money was equally divided, but it was stipulated in his will that the house was to go to the son who was first married. Benjamin has never been on friendly terms with his brother since Oscar's engagement to Eleanor was first announced. He has often accused Oscar of desiring to turn him from his home, and the result is that a tremendous breach has been opened between them. Of course Oscar's marriage would turn Benjamin out, and I argue that he may have done this thing with the intention of removing Oscar from his path and securing an incontestable right to the house. This supposition is rendered still stronger by the fact that he disappeared on the day set for the wedding and has not been located since."

"That is well argued, Captain," Quincy thoughtfully agreed, "but there still remain other possibilities, I suppose. I want to become familiar with every one of them. Has your daughter any other admirers, so far as you are aware?"

"No," the captain replied. "I retired from active service five years ago and she has never, since I have been home, been sought by any man other than the two to whom she has been engaged. In fact, I have had her with me always, for she and her mother used to accompany me on nearly every

trip. I was in the Trans-Atlantic passenger service, which fact," he added with a twinkle, "will account for my being able to talk in everyday English and without such embellishments as 'shiver my timbers' and 'avast there,' with which novelists so delight in endowing all seafaring men."

"But, Captain," Quincy persisted, "she must have had other male acquaintances. What I want is to discover as much as possible about her intimate associates."

"Of course she knew all the young men in our vicinity," the captain continued; "but I would stake my reputation that none of them would commit a crime such as this in order to clear the way so that he might get her, if that is what you wish to infer. The only other male acquaintance with whom she has come in frequent contact is Lieutenant Frederick Denham, stationed at the Portsmouth navy yard, and he is a friend of mine, rather than of hers."

"But couldn't he have been in love with her?" Quincy questioned quickly.

"Lord bless you, no! Poor Denham was engaged to a young woman who fell overboard in some manner from my ship during the last trip I made. He took her loss so much to heart that he has hardly ever looked at any woman since. He seems to be almost afraid of them. Then, too, he

was invited to both weddings and was to have played an important part in each, an usher at the first and best man at the second. He hated weddings on account of the memories they brought him, and he agreed to be present at Eleanor's only because we urged him so hard. He is an old friend of Oscar's, and has passed weeks at his house on several occasions. He is at my house now helping to look after Oscar and assisting in every way he can. You can safely put him out of your mind, because he knows nothing of the approach to the island nor has he the build to carry a man the size of Oscar across those stones, even if he knew of them."

Quincy nodded assent as the captain incontrovertibly disposed of Denham as a factor in the case, and appeared to run over the case in his own mind. The facts appearing to be fixed to his satisfaction, he quickly put an end to the consultation.

"Captain," he directed, "you go back to York as quickly as you can get there and wait for me. If your people do not know what your purpose was in coming to Boston, tell them nothing of your visit, or, if they do know of your purpose, give them to understand that the results have been unsatisfactory. I shall arrive in York very closely behind you, and you are to treat me as a guest, boarder, or whatever you please. Under no condi-

tion are you to tell the real purpose of my visit to anybody, not even to your wife or daughter. Be certain to obey this last direction to the letter, for it is important. Now hurry back to York."

The captain rose with alacrity and prepared to depart. Unquestioning obedience to orders was a part of his calling, and it made no difference whether the orders were issued to him or by him. With a hopeful smile on his face he bowed himself out of the door and was gone.

"Well, Gates," Quincy questioned, as the captain disappeared, "how does this case strike you?"

"It strikes me that I would like to be in on it," Gates replied somewhat enviously. "I only wish that it had occurred in Boston."

"There is one thing," Quincy remarked thoughtfully, "that strikes me as being very strange in this affair. Can you imagine, Gates, what motive a man would have in overpowering another man and then hiding him in plain sight on the landward side of an island when he could just as easily have disposed of him farther toward the interior? Or, what is still more strange, when he could just as easily have killed him outright and then have buried the body on the island where, according to the captain's statement, the chances are strong that it would never have been discovered?"

"The only answer I can think of," Gates re-

plied, after a brief interval of thought, "is that he may have wished merely to scare the man and fully intended that he should be discovered."

"Or," Quincy supplemented, "that he had strong reason to believe that the man would be dead before morning, and wished the body to be found as a warning to other men."

Gates seemed somewhat mystified by the reply, but made no comment other than to arch his eyebrows and slightly shrug his shoulders, a motion which was characteristic of him when strongly in doubt. For a time he sat idly by, watching Quincy with envious eyes while the latter completed his preparations for making the trip to York.

"Gee, Sawyer," he muttered, rising to depart, "you free lances certainly do get all the fun out of life, while we regulars scrape along on the secondaries." He paused in the doorway a moment, the envious look still in his eyes, and then with a friendly grin turned on his heel and disappeared.

Captain Orcutt was seated on his front piazza when Quincy lumbered up, seated in a decrepit old depot wagon. At sight of him the captain bounded from his chair and rushed forward with a shouted greeting that sounded almost too fervent to be real.

"I told the folks," he whispered, as Quincy stepped from the rickety conveyance, "that you was an old friend I met on one of my trips and that

you was going to pay us a short visit. I told them they mustn't disturb you, and that you were to have the whole run of the place just as you pleased."

At the information Quincy started a trifle disconcertedly. "You weren't suspiciously urgent in making the latter demand, were you, Captain?" he questioned.

"Lord, I don't know," said the captain seriously. "I guess I never was cut out for an actor. Anyhow, nobody seemed to think there was anything funny about it, so I guess it's all right. But come right in."

They entered the house and Quincy had his first view of the principal characters in the curious drama. Eleanor he found, as the captain had described her, a girl of striking charm, although her recent experiences had deeply marked and drawn her face, not so greatly, however, that its beauty was permanently injured, and it was evident that renewed ease of mind would return to her features all that were rightfully theirs. Oscar Silsby still lay stretched on a couch, recovering from his recent adventure. He was a large-framed, powerful young man, whose main regret appeared to be that he had not seen his assailant approaching, a failure which had undoubtedly been conducive to the continuing good health of the assailant.

Lieutenant Denham appeared in the person of a

slightly built, frank-faced man of about Silsby's age, but whose figure stood out like that of a boy's beside the massive bulk of his friend. The idea of his endeavouring to carry the huge body beside him through a powerful tide and across treacherous stepping stones appeared almost humourous in the light of its positive impossibility. The remaining figure of the group, Mrs. Orcutt, was a woman of the type native to the rural New England districts. Her figure appeared to possess a strength that would be capable of rendering a good account of itself in physical conflict with any person present, even the mighty young Silsby himself. She appeared taciturn and, although evidently anxious to do for the stranger all that hospitality demanded, she early made it plain to Quincy that he was her husband's guest and not hers. Her chief concern seemed to be for her daughter and from the girl's side she was hardly ever separated.

At the time of Quincy's arrival all things appeared to be progressing smoothly. The evening passed quietly, and without the appearance of any further developments. The captain seemed in an excellent humour, and regaled his guest with story after story of his experiences, many of which had been met in faraway corners of the earth. Lieutenant Denham added a few anecdotes of the navy, and even Mrs. Orcutt thawed out sufficiently to

contribute an occasional remark to the conversation. Silsby and Eleanor, however, remained silent for the most part, appearing to be fully occupied with their own thoughts.

When the party broke up at the usual early hour of the country, Quincy seated himself before an open window in his room and prepared to consider the matter in hand with the aid of his battered old briar pipe. During the entire evening he had been covertly watching every member of the household and, so far as he had been able to observe, not a single false or suspicious move had been made. According to his usual custom he set about his task of careful elimination and revolved the case slowly in his mind as he stared out into the moonlight. Theory after theory he mapped out, only to have each carefully erected idea come crashing down as the weak spot in its structure became apparent. For nearly an hour he had been busy with the task in hand when suddenly he was brought out of his reveries with a start as some small missile struck him in the face with stinging force.

The missile bounded back from his face and rolled slowly along the window sill, being identified as a pebble before its progress had been arrested. Staring sharply out into the open, Quincy was able dimly to make out the figure of a man crouching in the shadow of a large lilac bush and apparently

beckoning wildly to attract his attention. For a moment he hesitated and then, swinging lithely forward, he let himself over the sill and dropped easily to the ground. Running forward he was almost immediately at the side of the mysterious figure, eager to discover who the visitor might be.

"What do you want?" he questioned, as he drew up in the shade of the bush.

"I want a little of your fun, that's all," came the cool reply.

"Gates!" Quincy exclaimed in astonishment. "What the deuce are you doing here?"

Gates settled comfortably back on his heels before replying. "I'm sick of routine work, Sawyer," he complained. "I've been chasing through pawn shops for weeks, doing nothing more important than discovering the thieves of fake diamonds and cheap watches, until I'm sick and tired of it all. I felt as though I was entitled to a little change so, when this case came up, I wheedled the old man into giving me a leave of absence, and came up here to place myself under your orders. Now, if you undertake to send me back and keep me out of this case, I'll simply run amuck and pull you to pieces."

Quincy grinned at the fervency with which the last words were uttered, and then sank slowly by Gates' side. "You need have no fear on that score," he said. "I am of the opinion that I shall

need help on this case, and I am not only willing to have you here, but intensely pleased to see you."

He paused abruptly, as he made the remark, and, whirling half around, listened intently, while Gates drew farther into the shadow of the bush, and listened with equal attention. From the direction of the house had come a faint click, followed by the sound of soft footfalls across the floor of the piazza. Then the sounds ceased, and the two were able to see the figure of a man step from the piazza to the lawn and steal swiftly off into the night. As the man passed over a narrow strip of moonlit lawn Quincy gave vent to a startled exclamation, for the man was unquestionably no other than Captain Orcutt himself.

Without pausing to argue with each other the probable purpose of the captain's strange trip, Quincy and Gates bent low over the ground and ran carefully forward, their feet making no sound in the thick grass. When they drew up again they were but a few yards in the captain's rear, and they studiously maintained that distance until, when well within the woods, which proved to be little more than a scattered grove, the captain paused and gazed stealthily about. Apparently satisfied with his observation of the surroundings, he emitted a low whistle which was almost immediately answered from a point somewhat to one side.

Dropping flat on the earth, Quincy and Gates strained eyes and ears to gather whatever information they could from this strange affair, watching intently as a second figure detached itself from the shadows and came forward to meet the captain. They saw the two men come together, heard the dim hum of their voices, pitched in too low a tone for them to catch the words, and then distinctly saw something passed from one to another of the two, but because of the poor light they were unable to tell which man had done the passing.

With as much stealth as they had employed in meeting, the two men drew apart, the second figure slinking off into the shadows, while the captain faced about and came directly toward where the two watchers were partially concealed. With bated breath they held their positions, not daring to move hand or foot for fear of discovery; but, to their intense relief, the captain passed without appearing to catch sight of them and they noted that beneath one arm he carried a parcel. Again the game of chase was on, the detectives this time maintaining a distance farther in the captain's rear than that which they had kept on the outward trip.

But their caution appeared unnecessary, for the captain, seeming to feel less need for care now that his purpose, whatever it had been, was accomplished, strode straight for the house. He did not at once

re-enter, however; but, instead, skirted along the outer wall until he reached the side of a little shed somewhat to the rear. The two did not follow, but remained hidden in the long grass, from where they watched the old man at a distance. Captain Orcutt stooped a moment at the side of the shed, drew out two or three large stones from its foundation and quickly thrust his package through the opening thus formed. Then, replacing the stones, he once more made for the house and quickly disappeared within.

"What do you make of that?" Gates questioned in a whisper.

Quincy chuckled softly as he replied: "I don't make anything of importance of it. In fact, I think we have wasted our time in so carefully stalking the captain while we might have been engaged in hunting more interesting game."

"But that package," Gates persisted. "Don't you think we had better discover what it contains?"

"Oh, very well. Do so if you like," Quincy replied nonchalantly. "But, before you investigate, Gates, let me caution you to remember where you are." The last words were accompanied by a low chuckle and Gates stared questioningly at the sound.

"I'm going to look, anyway," he declared, making off toward the shed.

Quincy followed after, still chuckling audibly, and appearing to hugely enjoy the anticipation of

Gates' discovery. Provoked at Quincy's behaviour, Gates stubbornly held to his course, and proceeded directly to the spot where they had seen the package concealed. Hastily pulling out the three stones, he plunged his hand into the opening where it at once closed on the mysterious parcel. He drew it forth, feeling through the paper that it contained a hard, heavy object. Quickly breaking the twine, he tore off the paper and paused in amazement, his eyes blinking with the suddenness of the surprise and the blood rising angrily to his face at the renewed sound of Quincy's chuckles. In a twinkling the meaning of Quincy's command to remember where he was flashed over him. The paper contained a quart bottle of whisky.

"Remember where I am," Gates muttered, disgustedly. "Sure. In Maine, a 'dry' state. The captain was merely out to smuggle in his regular supply of wet goods. Bah!"

Feeling like a criminal caught red-handed, he quickly rewrapped the parcel and returned it to its hiding place, his feelings in no way rendered more serene by the sound of Quincy's continued chuckles.

"Well, what shall we do now?" he snapped, when the parcel had been reconsigned to its original resting place.

At the words Quincy's gravity returned, and he carefully consulted his watch before replying. "I

think," he said, " that we had best take a turn down toward Kittery and investigate the surroundings of Silsby's house by night. It's early yet and I have made arrangements with the local livery man to supply me with a rig at any time I may want it, either day or night."

Gates stared silently at him for a moment. " I say, Sawyer," he demanded suspiciously, " have you a hunch in regard to this affair? "

" No, not a hunch, Gates," Quincy replied, " for I don't act on hunches except, perhaps, on rare occasions. At this particular moment I am labouring with a well-formed and carefully considered idea. Now I propose that we proceed to the Silsby house without any further loss of time."

A short drive brought them to the Silsby house, and, leaving their carriage at a distance from the building, they proceeded on foot to the front entrance. There Gates, at Quincy's suggestion, seated himself under the sheltering shadow of a tree, while Quincy undertook the work of reconnoitring their surroundings. The house was in total darkness and gave every indication of being deserted, although Quincy was loath to believe that such was really the case. He circled stealthily about the house and then approached it from one side, spending several minutes in a vain endeavour to peer through one of the darkened windows. Not a sound came from

within or without, and it was with a feeling of uneasiness that he finally relinquished his tour of the premises and started to return slowly to where he had left Gates. Before he had reached the entrance to the small yard, however, he was startled by the sound of somebody approaching and instantly he flattened himself among the shadows.

Hardly had he done so before a man appeared in the roadway, coming, apparently, from the direction along which he and Gates had recently travelled. The man turned in at the gate and slowly approached the house, Gates following stealthily behind him and joining Quincy after the newcomer had passed. Silently they watched the man walk directly to the door and pause while he produced a key and gained entrance to the house. Then, almost as soon as he had entered, a light appeared behind one of the shaded windows and they could dimly hear the sound of subdued voices.

"Do you know him?" Gates whispered.

"I certainly do," came Quincy's response. "It's Oscar Silsby, the man who's supposed to be lying helpless at Orcutt's. Let's get nearer to that window, and perhaps we may be able to catch a few words of their conversation. This particular development is something I had not bargained on, although it does not differ greatly from what I really did expect."

Carefully they approached the house, and knelt below the window, through which they were able to catch the dull hum of voices. As the voices rose a trifle and the tones became more distinguishable Gates started violently.

"A woman!" he exclaimed.

Quincy merely nodded in reply, and pressed his ear more firmly to the window pane. The development was by no means unexpected by him, although he was not as yet certain as to what might be the result of the discovery. So intent the pair became in striving to fathom the new circumstance that their usual vigilance became somewhat relaxed, a fact which brought them a tremendous surprise.

"Gentlemen," said a quiet voice close beside them, "you seem deeply interested."

Both men sprang to their feet and whirled toward the speaker. It needed but a single look, however, to tell them that, whatever was the desire of the newcomer, they were powerless to resist it at the moment, for the muzzle of a heavy revolver pointed unwaveringly in their direction.

The man with the revolver surveyed them carefully from head to foot before again speaking. "Now, if you please," he continued, "step inside the house. You may be able to better satisfy your curiosity in that manner."

Quincy and Gates, having no option in the mat-

ter, silently complied with the imperative request and, passing through the door, found themselves in a small living-room. The room was furnished in an unusually comfortable manner and gave evidences of a refinement which Quincy had not expected. What immediately arrested his attention, however, was the presence of a pleasant-faced young woman who sat smiling at the men from the depths of a large arm chair. Her identity Quincy surmised, but her appearance seemed hardly to tally with that of the man holding the revolver. Before he was able to pursue the query to its full extent he once more was arrested by the voice of the man.

"Are you gentlemen both detectives, or is Mr. Sawyer the only one?" he questioned.

With an effort Quincy subdued his start of surprise as he replied. "We are both detectives. I suppose, since you are so well informed, that it is unnecessary to mention the purpose of our visit."

"It is," the man replied, smiling, while the young woman laughed aloud with a spontaneity that brought smiles to the lips of the detectives also.

"Then," said Quincy, facing squarely toward the man for the first time, "I suppose —" He paused abruptly, and stared at the man before him. "Ah," he continued. "I see that I made a mistake in the darkness outside. You are Benjamin Silsby, and not Oscar, as I first thought." The man

nodded and Quincy continued. "This is your wife?"

"Yes, we were married on the evening preceding the time set for Oscar's wedding. So, you see, that disposes of the motive I am supposed to have possessed for desiring Oscar's death." He watched Quincy narrowly for a brief interval before again speaking. "I should have looked you up tomorrow, Mr. Sawyer, had you not been so kind as to pay me this visit, because I have one or two details to add to the story you are working out.

"You see, in this vicinity Oscar and I are supposed to be bitter enemies, our hatred of each other being laid to that clause in my father's will which gave this house to the first of us who married. As a matter of fact, we are and always have been the best of friends, and our supposed enmity of the present time is nothing more nor less than a hoax. You know, of course, of the death of Bob Harrison just previous to the time set for his wedding with Eleanor Orcutt, so it will be unnecessary for me to go into details in that direction.

"When Oscar became engaged to her, however, I was seized with an overpowering fear for his safety. He was inclined to laugh at me at first, and said that, because Bob Harrison had met his death in that tragic manner, it was no sign that he would repeat the tragedy. But, in spite of his argu-

ments, I was possessed of a deep-seated conviction that Harrison's death was the result of no mere coincidence, and that the same power which had killed him would soon be turned on Oscar. I finally brought him to a point where he would consider the matter more gravely and the result was that we patched up this fake quarrel.

"My idea was that if we became apparently bitter enemies there might be a chance of his would-be murderer dropping a hint in my hearng. Whenever we were in public after that, or when there was anybody within hearing, we would glare and snarl at each other as though but the slightest occurrence would be necessary to precipitate an actual combat between us. But at home our lives proceeded as quietly as ever, and we were constantly making plans for the apprehension of Oscar's possible assailant. As time went on, though, I believe Oscar became careless, his mind being filled with the details of his wedding, and at the very last he did not seem to give even a thought to the possibility of danger.

"We had arranged that I was to be married on the evening preceding his own wedding, so that the farm would come to me, and I had already purchased his half interest in it so that the arrangement would be entirely fair. Consequently I was away at the time he was assaulted, and did not learn

of his attempted murder until after he had been found. I then hurried back here and set about searching for the assailant, but my search up to the present has been unavailing. I learned that Captain Orcutt had a stranger visiting him, and I made up my mind that the man must be a detective, and also that I would interview him at the first opportunity and offer him whatever assistance I might give. That completes the story of my connection with the affair, and Oscar will readily verify all that I have told you.

"I have, however, one detail of the affair which I would like to give you, and on which I should like your opinion. Captain Orcutt, I know, is of the opinion that Oscar's body was conveyed to the island over the stepping stones, because the captain persists in holding to the belief of the older residents of this place that the island is absolutely unreachable from the landward side except by means of those stones. That idea is true so far as a sailing boat or a dory is concerned, but I cannot understand why they should so persistently overlook the fact that it might be easily reached by a motor boat, and I am positive that Oscar's body was conveyed in that manner. I draw that conclusion because on the back of his coat I found a large grease stain."

As he paused to allow the significance of his state-

ment to be grasped Quincy interjected a question.

"Could not the stain have been formed by axle grease from the buggy?"

"No, I do not think so," Silsby replied at once. "Axle grease leaves not only a stain, but also a thin coating of the grease, while this mark was merely an oily stain. Furthermore, had it been axle grease, there would have been only a small mark to show the point where he had struck against the buggy when falling, probably on the side or front of his coat. This stain was as large around as a saucer, was in the middle of his back and gave every indication of having been formed by Oscar's lying in a small pool of oil which had gathered in the bottom of a boat. No boat would need oil except a motor boat, or at least no boat that would have been employed for the purpose of taking him across to the island."

"You argue your case like a veteran," Quincy complimented. "Now have you any suspicion as to who the criminal may have been?"

Silsby shook his head. "None in the least. I think that I have successfully accounted for every motor boat in this vicinity on the night in question, but there is, of course, nothing to have prevented a boat from some other portion of the coast running in for the purpose on that night. I have searched

day and night since that time, and have been unable to find even the slightest clue on the outside. Lieutenant Denham is helping me by keeping watch at the house, although I have had no words with him, and he is even of the opinion that the quarrel between Oscar and myself was real. I am now anxious to have the whole affair placed in your hands and, if I can assist in any way, you have but to call on me."

Quincy leaned thoughtfully against the door post and appeared to be mentally dissecting Benjamin before venturing a reply. At length he straightened up with a quick jerk of his shoulders and faced half about. "I do not see how we can accomplish anything further tonight," he said. "Tomorrow we shall be able to make a careful examination of such few clues as have been left, and it is possible that we may shortly be able to fasten the crime on the guilty person. Tomorrow, also, we shall call on you for assistance, Mr. Silsby."

"Such assistance as I can give will be entirely at your service," Benjamin replied simply, as Quincy and Gates took their departure.

Hardly had they stepped from the door to the path, however, before Gates turned on Quincy.

"Sawyer, you've already settled on the man who killed Harrison and tried the trick on Silsby,"

he said reproachfully. "Why don't you take me in on it?"

Quincy chuckled, but made no immediate reply, and in the half light thrown by the moon Gates was unable to see his face. "Are you certain that your observation is not at fault, Gates?" Quincy replied finally. "Your deduction may lead merely to another bottle of whisky."

Gates snorted disgustedly. "Don't rub it in, Sawyer," he protested. "I don't make every mistake that occurs when we're working a case together. But, look here, I haven't worked with you on numerous cases without being able to read by your expression when you have settled the matter in your own mind. Loosen up now and — Great Jehoshaphat!"

The exclamation was caused by the sudden sharp crack of a pistol. Simultaneously Gates' hat leaped from his head and Gates himself dropped to earth and scuttled for the shelter of the nearest stone wall like a startled chipmunk. Quincy made the wall with two bounds and, by the time Gates arrived, was already crouching with drawn revolver while he awaited some sound that would give him the direction of their enemy's position. The sound came in the shape of a fusilade of pistol shots, all so accurate as to make the position taken up by the two men decidedly uncomfortable. As soon as the hail of bullets died away, however, both men re-

plied in kind as rapidly as they could work their revolvers, but with little hope of doing damage as the attacker was in the shadow and they were consequently forced to shoot blindly.

"Is it one man or a dozen?" Gates whispered, as he paused to reload his revolver.

"One man with an automatic pistol I should say," Quincy replied. "And this piece of craziness forms another link in my chain of evidence. But, come! We must drive him out of there or he will keep us here all night."

He cautiously raised his head above the wall and, meeting with no opposition, slipped over himself and crept into the shelter of a clump of bushes. Gates followed, and almost immediately the man in the woods again opened fire. That he was an excellent shot they needed no witnesses to prove, for the bullets clipped through the leaves about them in a most uncomfortable manner and it was only by lying flat on the earth that they escaped unhurt.

When a temporary cessation of the firing seemed to indicate that the man's magazine had again become exhausted, the two slipped forward a few more feet and gained shelter in the edge of the woods. They were now in hostile territory, indeed, and fully realized that extreme caution must be exercised to prevent them from stumbling on their enemy in the darkness, with results probably

disastrous to themselves. With an almost agonizing caution lest a breaking twig betray them, they crept among the trees. Every dark shadow held a hidden threat and, for aught they knew, from behind any tree in their vicinity there might suddenly break a rain of steel-jacketed bullets.

Suddenly, from a bit to one side of their position, there sounded a faint rustling among the leaves and with one accord the pair cuddled tight against the earth and stared vainly into the darkness with eyes straining and hands tensely clutching their revolvers. Again came the rustling and, joined with it, there sounded a single shot, a shot that appeared to have been fired at random in the hope of discovering their position. Gates raised his revolver to reply, but Quincy sharply drew it back and clung tenaciously to the hand to prevent a recurrence of the movement.

Silence reigned for several minutes, but at last there came another sound of rustling, this time in a direction still different. Both men turned their faces toward the sound, and silently awaited developments. The rustling, soft and cautious, continued, seeming to work constantly nearer and nearer to the road. At last came a momentary pause and then, slowly and gradually, the outline of a man formed against the open sky indicating the roadway.

At the sight Gates shook his hand gently free from Quincy's grasp, and bent forward to stalk the strange assailant. Now that he had the drop on the man Gates had no doubt of his ability to secure his prisoner, either dead or alive. But he was doomed to disappointment. Before he had taken two stealthy steps forward the air was rent by two reverberating crashes, joined so closely as to be almost a single report.

"It's Silsby," Quincy muttered aside to Gates, "and he has a shotgun. Let's rush the place, and see what the result has been."

As with a single impulse, they were over the wall and tearing in the direction from which the shots had come, their revolvers ready for instant use and their eyes straining forward for the faintest sign of danger. Nothing appeared, however, and, not until they ran headlong into Silsby, who was charging from another direction, did they realize that their bird had flown.

"He kind of got you fellows with your eyes shut, didn't he?" Silsby grinned. "When I first heard him shoot I had an idea as to what must have happened. Pretty work, isn't it, for a civilized country community like this?"

"Did you see him?" Quincy questioned.

"No, he heard me coming and I had to shoot before I could get near enough to see him. I gave

him something to remember me by, though, unless he escaped by a miracle. I didn't have anything bigger than number eight shot, but a quantity of number eight spread around through a man's person will give him a heap to think about."

To the surprise of his companions Quincy seemed suddenly infused with a tense seriousness that bordered almost on alarm. "Gates," he ejaculated sharply, "the quicker we get back to Orcutt's the better it will be all around. Come quick. If that man steals our horse I am afraid of the results. Don't stop to ask questions. Come." And without further words he set off on a run, the astonished Gates stumbling along at his heels.

The horse was where they had left it and, leaping into the buggy, Quincy applied the whip with a vigour that startled the aged animal into what was for him a tremendous burst of speed. Gates was unable to comprehend the sudden turn of events, but he well knew that it would be useless to ask questions at the present time, so he merely sat tight and awaited developments. They came with a vengeance.

Dashing into the Orcutt's yard at full speed, Quincy reined the horse almost back on his haunches and, not pausing to tether him, rushed into the house, Gates still hanging close to his heels. The commotion stirred up by their entrance aroused

Captain Orcutt and, as they rushed through the dining-room, Gates could hear his gruff voice shouting a challenge from above. Quincy did not pause, however, but ran straight to the room where Silsby was sleeping, switched an electric flashlight on the bed and stared eagerly at the silent form.

To his evident relief the man's breast rose and fell with the regularity of healthy sleep, and immediately the flashlight whipped along the bed, carefully avoiding Silsby's face, but lighting up with deliberate care the breast and arms.

"I smell it, Gates, but where the deuce is it?" Quincy spoke in a voice rendered hoarse by suspense. "Ah!" The light came to a pause at a point on the pillow almost under Silsby's head, where a peculiar little object seemed fastened to the pillow slip. Watching closely, Gates saw Quincy's hand creeping slowly across the pillow with a steadiness and care that betokened the need of the utmost caution. For an instant the hand seemed to pause above the object, and then slowly and carefully it passed on until it came to a stop immediately beneath and almost touching Silsby's head. Gates saw the cords in the wrist draw taut, the fingers stiffen for action and then, with a sharp jerk, the hand flashed up, throwing Silsby's head clear of the pillow and dropping it fully three feet away from the strange little object. Gates heard

Silsby's snort of startled awakening, heard the bed creak as Quincy leaped on the man, and held him prostrate, and then heard Quincy's voice, still tense with excitement, whisper:

"Go outside quick, Gates, and see if there are bicycle tracks in the roadway. Look carefully, and, above all, hurry!"

Gates vanished and almost at the same instant a wavering stream of light appeared in the doorway, growing ever stronger as it approached, until the room was fully lighted by the entrance of Captain Orcutt bearing a streaming and smoking lamp. At sight of Quincy, calmly seated astride Silsby's back, the captain paused with open mouth as though inclined to doubt the evidence of his own eyes, but, after a moment of hesitation, he set the lamp on a stand and circumspectly approached the bed.

"Are you fully awake, Silsby?" Quincy inquired quietly.

"I should be after all this," came the reply, somewhat muffled by the pillow into which Silsby's face was pressed.

"Then don't move. You've had a mighty narrow escape and you are not fully out of danger yet, unless you follow my directions."

Quincy slowly raised himself from his position and stepped to the floor, jerking the pillow on which the curious object was fixed after him.

"Now, Silsby," he said, "you may move as much as you please."

Silsby rolled slowly over on his back, and stared amazedly at Quincy, as the latter carefully shoved the pillow beneath the bed. Hardly had he done so before Mrs. Orcutt and Eleanor appeared in the doorway behind him, both in a state of dishabille rendered excusable on account of the sudden alarm which had brought them to the spot. Behind them appeared Gates and, looking across their shoulders, Quincy caught Gates' silent nod in answer to the questioning look in his eyes. The nod appeared to satisfy him, for he turned at once toward the captain.

"Where is Lieutenant Denham?" he demanded.

"Right here," came the immediate response, as Denham elbowed his way into the room. "What has happened?"

"What has happened?" Quincy repeated scornfully, looking straight at Denham and, to the surprise of Gates at least, working himself up to a high pitch of anger. "There has been another attempt made on Oscar Silsby's life, and it is through no thanks to you that the attempt has failed. What were you doing up-stairs when you were supposed to be watching this man and guarding against such attempts?"

Denham's eyes flashed with savage fury at the

condemnation. "Who are you that you question me in this manner?" he demanded. "How was I to suppose that an attempt would be made inside this very house? I thought things had quieted down so that it was safe to leave Oscar, and, the Lord knows, I needed rest after the events of the last week."

"Bah," Quincy replied in heated tones. "No man has a right to suppose anything in a case of this nature. He should be always on the watch." As he concluded he pushed Denham roughly aside, as though in complete disgust at the man's inefficiency. Then, to the surprise of everybody, he stepped coolly back and stood surveying Denham with a quiet smile.

"I thought so, Lieutenant Denham," he said slowly and significantly. "I expected that you would cringe if a sudden pressure should be applied to your body. Benjamin Silsby's number eights did their work, I see. Watch out, Gates!"

His shout of warning came too late for, before Gates had time in which to act, Denham stood with his back to the wall, a gleaming automatic pistol in his hand. This pistol wavered here and there in threatening gestures, and the eyes behind it told plainly that the first move on the part of any person present meant sudden death. The lieutenant's eyes seemed to scintillate with a strange

light, and he gave vent to a wild, mocking laugh.

"So you butted in," he exclaimed in the high, wild voice of a madman. "Aren't you sorry? I would have let you live if you had kept out, but now I am going to kill you. I am going to kill you all and, while the house burns over your bodies, I shall sit outside and revel in the sight."

The words were followed by another mocking laugh that fairly froze the blood of his listeners, and Quincy, on whom the lieutenant's fury seemed to centre, cursed himself fervently. It was his own fault that this had happened, he told himself. Why, fool that he was, had he not given Gates warning, or why had he, himself, stepped back out of reach before making his accusation? Their only chance of life seemed to be in a quick leap on his part toward the madman. Perhaps he should be successful and perhaps he should not, but it formed the only possibility. But, even as he gathered his muscles for the spring, help came from an unexpected source.

Mrs. Orcutt, who had been listening motionlessly from a little to one side of the lieutenant, suddenly launched her muscular frame at him, flung his pistol hand into the air, and wrapped her powerful arms about him. The lieutenant struggled fiercely and yelled mad curses at her for a second, but, al-

most before he was able to realize what had happened, he was thrown to the floor by the sudden rush of Quincy and Gates from opposite directions. His pistol was whipped from his hand and the inspector's arms were about him before he was able to gather himself for resistance.

"God, Sawyer!" Gates growled hoarsely, as he regained his feet, dragging the lieutenant after him, "that was the worst break I ever knew you to make."

"I admit it, Gates," Quincy muttered contritely. "He was quicker than I gave him credit for being. But he is our man, anyhow, and the dangers surrounding this household are over with his capture. Look out!"

As on the first occasion, his warning came too late and, even though Quincy leaped toward Denham at the very moment of his shout, he was not quick enough to be of assistance. With a sudden sharp twist and a jerk, rendered irresistible by reason of the exaggerated strength of a madman, Denham had squirmed out of Gates' grasp and, striking right and left, made the door, through which he disappeared with the speed of a frightened rabbit. Neither Quincy nor Gates paused for words, but with one accord leaped after him, plunging through the door and out through the remainder of the house until they stood again in the open air. In

the middle distance they could see Denham running with long, powerful strides toward the carriage shed, into which he disappeared.

"He's after his bicycle," Gates yelled, as the pair tore along after him. "If he gets it we may as well bid him good-bye for the present."

Denham indeed succeeded in securing his bicycle, but Quincy and Gates, approaching on either side of the road, felt certain that he would never be able to get past them without one or the other being able to drag him to earth. To their complete surprise, however, Denham made no attempt to turn in their direction, but instead, swinging directly out of the road, struck off across the fields, pedalling with all his might, and at regular intervals giving vent to one of his fearful blood-curdling yells.

Quincy and Gates, astonished though they were by this strange maneuvre, did not hesitate an instant, but struck off across the fields in pursuit, feeling certain that it was now merely a matter of a short time before they would be able to apprehend their man. On and on the rider went, avoiding rocks and hidden hollows by what seemed miracles, and after him ran the panting detectives.

"He's headed for the cliffs," Quincy shouted after a time. "He'll get himself in a pocket soon and we can get him there."

Across the broad field, and well into the broken land at the landward end of the cliffs, the chase continued, the two pursuers now gaining with every stride as the rough going retarded the progress of Denham. But, by what seemed almost superhuman means, Denham succeeded in crossing the broken ground and at last reached the smooth cliff tops. There, instead of slacking speed and gradually coming to a stop as they had expected, he bent lower over his handle bars and increased his efforts.

The bicycle, even though one tire had been punctured by the trip across the rough field, quickly responded to the increased exertions of the rider, and picked up speed across the smooth rocks to an astonishing degree. In a space of time covering but a few seconds at the most Denham reached the outer limits of the cliffs and the pursuers breathed easier as they ran forward, expecting momentarily to see him dismount and turn at bay. But in that expectation they were disappointed.

Instead of slacking speed as the water loomed before him, Denham redoubled his efforts and at last, on the very edge of the rocks, rose erect in his saddle, gave vent to a single wild yell of defiance, and coasted over the edge to the certain death which awaited him below. Plainly revealed, he stood against the sky line for an instant and then,

as if snatched away by some unseen hand, he disappeared, just as Quincy and Gates tore across the slippery rocks to the point where he had last been seen.

"God!" Gates muttered, pausing in awed horror at the edge of the rocks, and gazing into the tumbling breakers below. "He's gone now, sure enough."

Quincy nodded assent. "Yes, he's gone," he said quietly. "And, everything considered, I think it is as well that he is."

There was no use in searching for the body, for they well knew that the swift current would bear it away until such a time as it might be washed ashore, as had the body of young Harrison two years before. Silently they turned about and made their way slowly back to the house. As they entered alone the eyes of all were turned questioningly on them, and Quincy's grave nod was readily interpreted.

"Is he gone?" Captain Orcutt questioned solemnly.

"He's gone," Quincy repeated, and then added: "Over the cliffs."

"Too bad," the captain muttered with a slow shake of his head. "He was a fine man once."

"But how did you settle on him?" Silsby demanded, from where he lay propped on one elbow.

"I suppose you men are detectives, but how did you work the case out in so short a time?"

"As for that," Quincy replied quietly, "I had already determined before coming here that the deeds described must have been done by a madman, and Denham was the only person present who gave any indication of being such. When I first took up the case my suspicions were directed strongly toward Benjamin Silsby, but the events of this night promptly turned them in another direction. All the evening I watched Lieutenant Denham, but failed to detect any symptom of definite insanity, although his manner at various times led me to believe strongly that his mind was not thoroughly right. Our visit to Benjamin Silsby, and the events following it, firmly settled his guilt for me, but of that visit I shall tell you later, Captain. Now let me trace the matter up from my own starting point.

"In the first place I was obliged to proceed, of course, on the events of this case alone, as the other occurred so long ago as to be absolutely useless for reference at the present time. There was, however, the single circumstance of Denham's having been present on each occasion. As I said previously, I had determined that this assault on Silsby was the work of a madman, because no sane man would have placed Silsby, after having, I feel certain,

taken steps which led him to believe that Silsby would soon die, in a spot where his discovery was an absolute certainty.

"A sane man would either have made certain that Silsby was dead, and then have secreted the body, or, if doubt existed, he would have stowed the unconscious form of his victim farther toward the interior of the island, knowing full well that in all probability the man would die before he could be discovered. Furthermore, at the time of his assault, Denham used a very virulent and almost unknown poison which, the chances are, would never have been discovered by a medical examiner. A sane man, probably, would have merely applied the poison, left the body in the buggy and then have allowed the horse to jog along to its destination, where the chances are that Silsby's death would have been attributed to natural causes.

"All this is, of course, merely supposition, for it is practically impossible to determine what either a sane or an insane man will do under given circumstances, but the probabilities were such, however, that I strongly favoured the theory of insanity. Now as to the poison. It is a peculiar Indian poison known to the police as the 'devil's necktie,' because it is always applied either in the neck or head. It is practically unknown, but was used a year ago in the Mansell case, and Denham

probably secured his information concerning it from the careful descriptions written by the press at that time. There is one thing about it, however, which renders it unsatisfactory as a criminal medium. If applied in too great quantities at the first injection, it acts as its own antidote and, after a week or two, the effects of it will pass off.

"When I arrived I could not believe that a man of Silsby's physique could be laid up so long simply as the result of assault and exposure. Then, when I learned of his long period of unconsciousness, I at once jumped to the conclusion that this strange poison had been used. I did not, however, expect that a repetition of the attack would occur so shortly after the first assault, and it was not until we were attacked at Benjamin Silsby's that I grew alarmed over Oscar's safety.

"I suspected that it was Denham who fired on us, and that act plainly forged another link in the chain of circumstances marking him as insane. I rushed back here with all speed and discovered that his trap had been well laid. Before proceeding, I must state, in connection with the poison, that its second injection, in no matter what quantity, is invariably fatal. Here is the arrangement for its second injection, and you will readily see that it would probably escape suspicion even had it been successful, should not the examiner chance to notice the pres-

ence of the peculiar odour which always surrounds the poison."

As he finished speaking, he stooped and drew from under the bed the pillow which he had snatched from Silsby's side. On the pillow was caught an ordinary green burdock burr.

"There is the trap," Quincy stated. "That burr has been soaked in the poison, and then placed on the pillow. Silsby would in all probability have rolled on to it during the night, the burr would have caught in his head or neck, and who would have paid attention to so trivial a matter as a burdock burr or such minor wounds as it might have made in the skin? It is needless for me to call to your attention the fact that the poison in this case would have been fatal.

"You saw Denham's act when I accused him, and you no doubt noticed the involuntary start he gave when I roughly handled one or more of the raw wounds which Benjamin Silsby's shot left in his body. His was not a case of feigned insanity, but was an incontrovertible fact. Your daughter's wedding, Captain, can now, I think, proceed without further interruptions of a tragic nature."

"But I don't understand," the captain stammered. "Why should Denham, even if he was insane, harbour such a fearful grudge against myself or any member of my family?"

Quincy replied with a slight shrug. "Who can fathom the mental processes of a madman?" he questioned. "It may be that he lost his reason at the time the young woman to whom he was engaged lost her life on your ship. It may be that, in his twisted reasoning, he held you responsible for her loss and determined to wreak his vengeance on your family and on yourself for the suffering he had been caused. It may be that he insanely desired your daughter himself, as a recompense for his own loss, and, in his warped sense of justice, took the means he did to remove other suitors from his path. Who can tell? I think, Captain," he concluded, "that the skeleton has now been removed from your feast."

"But, Sawyer," Gates interrupted, "what was there about that bicycle? I saw the tracks, but what of them?"

"Oh, I had forgotten," Quincy replied. "I saw a bicycle here when I first arrived, and, when we were fired on, I surmised that Denham had ridden down on it. I wanted you to look for the tracks so that I might judge whether or not my surmise was correct."

"Yes, but one more question. How was Silsby carried to the island?"

"Another surmise, Gates, and one which it will not be necessary now to substantiate. In that par-

ticular direction Benjamin Silsby's theory is doubtless correct, except that he did not carry it far enough. As he said, Silsby must have been conveyed to the island in a motor boat, but you will remember that he added that he had accounted for every boat in the vicinity. That was probably true, except that he accounted for them so far as the owners knew. A man as familiar with the neighbours as was Denham undoubtedly knew which of them were so careless as to leave their boats in such a manner that they might be run out by anybody who chose to do so, and he simply borrowed a boat for the occasion. Thus, you see, he had his tracks successfully covered, except for the fatal mistake of leaving his victim in a position where he might be discovered from the shore. That led to the discovery by Benjamin of the grease stain on his coat, and the consequent abandonment of the theory that only a man knowing the stepping stones to the island could have so disposed of the victim.

"There now remains nothing, Captain, except the recovery of Denham's body, and with that, of course, Inspector Gates and I have no part. Our work is finished and there remains nothing for us save to return to the city."

IV

THE AFFAIR OF THE TRIMOUNTAIN BANK

Quincy laid aside his evening paper and stared dismally at the small table in the corner of his den where stood his telephone. The 'phone was now silent and he lingered in his original position, a vague, though he well knew groundless, hope in his mind that its ringing would not be renewed. Again came the shrill summons, longer and more insistent than on the first occasion, and with a resigned groan Quincy dragged himself out of the great leather chair which had belonged to his grandfather before him and reluctantly crossed the room. He paused a moment, telephone in hand, while he listened to the rain which the cold east wind was driving against the window. Then, with an involuntary shiver at the thought that he might soon be called forth into the unfriendly weather, he unhooked the receiver.

"Hello!" A note of increasing irritation seemed to be in the word. "That you, Sawyer? You've been long enough in answering my ring."

"Oh, hello, Gates," replied Quincy, immediately

recognizing the voice as that of his friend of police headquarters. "I was hoping that this call would prove nothing more than an inquiry or, at worst, an invitation; but I see my hopes are blasted. What's the trouble?"

"Nothing that need disturb your home-loving instincts," came the sarcastic reply. "The Trimountain Bank has been robbed; its president, Gorham Edgerly, chloroformed; and a few minor occurrences of a similar nature have been pulled off, that's all."

Quincy grinned at the telephone. "Much obliged for the trouble you have taken to call me up and tell me about it," he called. "Will you allow me to return to my paper now?"

"Paper nothing! Edgerly wants you to come down and help out on the case. He thinks that the larger his pack of hounds the more likelihood there is of their bagging the game. Get down as quickly as you can, please, because he won't talk until you are here."

"Won't, eh!" Quincy's voice betokened surprise. "He's the first robbed and assaulted man I ever heard of who wasn't ready to tell his story a dozen times to everybody within reach."

Twenty minutes later Quincy was admitted to the president's office of the Trimountain Bank. As he entered he cast a quick glance about at the

men already assembled. Inspector Gates he recognized with a friendly nod, and then turned his attention toward the others, who were, he judged, connected with the bank. The man with the weary, spent face who was seated in a corner he decided must be Edgerly, while the other, from his uniform, was undoubtedly the night watchman of the building.

Before asking any questions or allowing any opportunity for the story, he bent over what appeared to be the main exhibit of the office, a heavy armchair placed squarely in the middle of the room and about which hung numerous folds of strong rope. Beside the chair lay a crumpled white handkerchief which, on closer examination, gave off a pungent odour, instantly recognized as that of chloroform. Those articles seemed to embody the entire plot of the story which was to be told and Quincy hardly needed to glance toward the open safe in the corner to acquaint himself in a general way with all the facts that Gorham Edgerly might relate. Stepping back from the chair, he gazed questioningly at Gates, who, in turn, nodded toward Edgerly.

"Mr. Edgerly," he said, "we are now ready for your story. This is Mr. Sawyer, if you will be satisfied with so informal an introduction."

At the words the bank president stirred slowly and

seemed to arouse himself with difficulty. He stared disinterestedly at the inspector and then turned his gaze in Quincy's direction, seeming to arouse his senses by degrees.

"Pardon my seeming helplessness, gentlemen," he said, speaking with an evident effort. "You will understand that I have been under a very severe strain during the last few hours, and I have not as yet fully recovered from it."

"Do you still feel the effects of the chloroform?" Quincy's tone was solicitous.

"Yes, yes, to some extent." Edgerly's faculties seemed to be returning rapidly. "But it is the strain, more than the chloroform, which is causing me the trouble at present, you will understand. The long wait here, during which time I was unable to attract the attention of anybody, proved a severe shock to my system."

"Of course, of course," Gates broke in impatiently. "But we are losing valuable time, Mr. Edgerly; so please tell us your story as quickly and as briefly as is possible."

Acceding somewhat ungraciously to the peremptory request, Edgerly leaned forward in his chair and commenced his narration, first glancing at the clock. "It is now nine o'clock, gentlemen, and the robbery occurred at about four. As a general rule everybody has left the bank by three, or three-

thirty, but I was delayed beyond my regular time today. My daughter left the city to visit friends in Springfield early in the afternoon, and I went to the station to see her aboard the train. I then returned to my office and, as my trip to the station had delayed some important work, I determined to stay here and finish it. The employees had all left by shortly after three, and I was the only person in our rooms, as the watchmen change at three and, after the first round of the building, the night man is busy in the basement until early in the evening.

"I was seated in that big chair, looking over the papers which at present lie there on my desk, and just what happened I am not certain. My impression is that somebody sneaked up behind me and applied the chloroform, afterward tying me in my chair and making away with the money which is missing. When I regained consciousness, I found myself tied to the chair, and, twist as I would, I could not get free. I shouted myself hoarse in an attempt to attract the attention of the watchman, but he was unable to hear me, and it was not until he entered the room at eight o'clock that he discovered me and set me free. My first act then was to notify the police, and after that to have you, Mr. Sawyer, summoned, as I wished to be personally represented in the hunt. That, I believe, is the

entire story. Now, I presume, you wish to question me."

"In the first place, Mr. Edgerly," Quincy inquired, "how much money is missing, and how did it chance to be here in your safe instead of in the vault?"

"The sum of fifty thousand dollars is missing. It was in my safe because it was my personal property, negotiated today by a loan. I have been robbed, not the bank."

"Then you undoubtedly have an idea as to who may have taken it, for I presume that the knowledge of the money did not extend far beyond yourself. And in this same connection I wish to ask whether the safe door was open or closed when you last remember it."

"The safe door is never open. It is a rule which has become a habit with me to always close it immediately after removing whatever I wish from the safe. As to my having suspicions in regard to the culprit, I must reply that I have a very strong suspicion, — not only a suspicion, but almost a certainty. The knowledge of the money extended, beyond myself, to nobody but my secretary, Herbert Jay, who is also the bank's paying teller. He knew of the money because he placed it in my safe for me, and, furthermore, he is the only person, aside from myself, who knows the combination of the

safe. Consequently I see no grounds for suspicions that point to anybody other than Mr. Jay."

"When did you last see Mr. Jay?" Quincy asked, thoughtfully tapping the arm of his chair.

"Just before I went to the station with my daughter. He came to me then and said he was obliged to leave the city for a short time, and asked permission to remain away during a portion of to-morrow forenoon. I granted the permission and he left the bank at once. I have not seen him since."

"In order for a man to have committed this robbery after the manner you have described, would it not have been necessary for him to have been secreted in the building? He could not have gained access after the clerks had left, I suppose?"

"Of course he could not have entered after that time."

Quincy watched the banker thoughtfully for a few moments. "Then am I to understand, Mr. Edgerly," he said, "that in your opinion this man, Jay, left the bank as a blind, returned after you had gone to the station, and hid himself in this room, let us say in that closet? After you had become busy he slipped out of his place of concealment, chloroformed you, bound you in your chair and, after looting your safe, made his escape? He would have had no trouble in leaving the building?"

"No, the doors are equipped with double spring locks, which are easily opened from the inside."

"Now allow me to seemingly digress a trifle, Mr. Edgerly. Were you acquainted with Jay, or with any of his habits, outside the bank?"

"Yes, he has frequently been to my house."

Quincy permitted a momentary expression of surprise to flit across his face at the information. "Oh, then you received him socially? Of course, then, he was acquainted with your daughter?"

"Not at all!" Edgerly appeared to snap out the words with more vehemence than was entirely called for. "His visits to my house were of a purely business, and not a social, nature. We were frequently obliged to spend entire evenings over various phases of the bank's business. He was, as you say, acquainted with my daughter; but not in the manner which you intimate. My daughter has few male acquaintances, as she is engaged to marry Jabez Rhodes, the capitalist."

Once more Quincy allowed a brief expression of surprise to appear on his face. "But is not Mr. Rhodes a bit — er — elderly? I was not aware of his engagement."

"His age has nothing to do with the matter," Edgerly responded stiffly. "He has the wealth with which to give my daughter a good home, and

it is my wish that she should marry him. She has never made any objection to doing so."

"And the money which was stolen from you was a loan from Mr. Rhodes?"

"It was." Edgerly's manner stiffened still more. "It was borrowed on excellent security. I hardly see, however, why I should be called upon to answer these, to say the least, rather impertinent questions regarding my family and private affairs."

Quincy accepted the reprimand with a slight bow and rose to depart. "Just one more question, Mr. Edgerly," he remarked, as he slipped into his raincoat. "You were discovered by the watchman at eight o'clock. Was that the first time he had been through the rooms since coming on duty?"

"Yes, with the exception of the preliminary round at three o'clock."

"Might I look at his rooms in the basement?"

"Certainly. He will show them to you."

At a sign from Edgerly the watchman led Quincy to the basement. To the man's intense surprise, when once they had reached the spot, Quincy insisted on searching its floors and walls with almost microscopic thoroughness. For perhaps half an hour this investigation continued, before the impatient voice of Gates shouted, from above, a summons for their return. On re-entering the office Quincy's eyes rested momentarily on those of

Gates, and the latter allowed himself the faintest of smiles as one of Quincy's eyelids drooped ever so slightly.

As they stood on the sidewalk outside, Quincy and Gates stared sharply at one another for several seconds, the latter being the first to speak.

"I guess we are on the same trail, aren't we, Sawyer?" he asked.

"I shouldn't be surprised if we are," Quincy replied. "And it strikes me that the trail leads very close to Jay at the present time, does it not?"

"It surely does. I'll have some of my men locate him tonight, and I'll 'phone you the result the first thing in the morning. The chances are that we won't be able to do anything before then."

"That is agreeable to me," Quincy approved. "By the way, Inspector, were you ever obliged to undergo a surgical operation?"

The inspector's eyes widened in surprise and then, with a half humourous shrug, he allowed his glance to run hastily over his own robust form. "I had a tooth pulled once," he volunteered.

"That is an operation of no mean proportions at times," Quincy affirmed, "but it will hardly help in this case. I have been operated on for appendicitis, and, if you had ever enjoyed a similar experience, I think you would catch the drift of my remark. But never mind. I'll explain it when the proper

time comes. Now suppose we go home out of the rain."

The following morning, in response to a telephone call, Quincy entered Gates' office, to discover the inspector seated with his feet resting on the window ledge and a scowl of deep thought on his face.

"Well, Gates, did you locate our man?" Quincy inquired, dropping into a chair without awaiting an invitation to do so.

Gates turned an odd glance in his direction before replying. "Oh, yes, we located him all right," he remarked very slowly.

"Good enough, so far as it goes, but where is he?"

Again Gates prefaced his reply with the same odd glance, then, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the general direction of the interior of the building, he remarked: "In there. He was picked up last night just after his return from some place he would not mention. He called up Edgerly to report that he had returned early and would be at his place at the usual time in the morning. Then Edgerly passed the word to us, swore out a warrant for Jay's arrest, and we have him here."

Quincy maintained a thoughtful silence for some little time. "Why do you think he returned," he asked finally, "bluff or ignorance?"

"To tell the truth, I can't make out," Gates responded. "I haven't been able to get a yip out of him regarding where he has been or why he went. He simply won't talk, not even to say whether he is guilty or innocent, and most of 'em are ready enough to plead innocence, even if they won't say anything else. Want to talk with him?"

As Quincy was ushered into one of the detention rooms, Herbert Jay was led in by an officer, and Quincy found himself facing a rather slightly built, pleasant-faced young man who, though seeming to realize his predicament, did not appear in the least broken by the circumstances. Quincy seated himself and signed Gates to remain in the room, keeping his eyes fixed all the while on Jay's face, to the latter's evident discomfort.

"Well, Mr. Jay," said Quincy kindly, "you realize where you stand, of course."

Jay responded with a sharp glance. "What is this — the third degree?" he demanded.

Quincy's eyes twinkled, while Gates grinned openly at the question. "No, we are hardly going to resort to such measures at the present time. We merely wish to question you and it can surely do you no harm to answer our questions."

Still Jay hesitated. "I do not like to talk unless my counsel is present," he said. Then, after more hesitation, "But go ahead. I didn't take Edgerly's

money, so I don't see what harm your questions can do me."

Quincy nodded gravely. "Where were you last evening after leaving the bank?" he inquired.

"I was in Worcester at the home of my aunt."

"Was it personal business that took you there?" The word business was strongly accented, and Jay's eyes narrowed slightly.

"I was there looking after personal affairs, yes."

"In your capacity of private secretary to Mr. Edgerly you frequently worked at his house, did you not?"

"Yes, on an average of two or three evenings a week."

"And, of course, whether he knew it or not, you became acquainted with Miss Edgerly."

Jay's eyes gave forth a flash of anger at the words, and his manner stiffened perceptibly. "I hardly see why Miss Edgerly's name should be dragged into this," he said coldly.

"I do not propose to drag it in any further," Quincy answered him; "but it was necessary for me to learn at least that much of your private life. Now, Mr. Jay, if you went to Worcester immediately after leaving the bank, are you able to produce a witness or two who can swear to having seen you in that city early in the evening?"

"I am able to produce witnesses," Jay responded unhesitatingly.

"Now, as a final question, why did you return last night, instead of this morning as you originally proposed?"

"Because my affairs in Worcester were quickly arranged and I hurried back so as to be at my desk without any unnecessary loss of time."

As Quincy rose to terminate the interview another thought appeared to strike him. "Oh, just a moment, Mr. Jay," he remarked, turning quickly. "Do you chance to know what security Mr. Edgerly offered Jabez Rhodes when borrowing that money?"

Jay's eyes flashed angrily. "I can imagine," he snapped in a tone that precluded further questioning on the subject.

Back in the inspector's office once more, Quincy seated himself, lighted a cigar and appeared for some time to be buried in deep thought. He seemed scarcely to notice the fact that Gates was busy at the telephone and was carrying on an apparently important conversation.

"Another development," Gates announced, hanging up the receiver and whirling about in his chair.

"Well, what is it?" Quincy inquired mildly after a pause of several seconds.

"Edgerly's daughter is not with her friends in Springfield, and they know nothing, whatever, as to her whereabouts."

"Huh! I expected that. You don't mean to tell me, Gates, that you haven't placed your finger on that particular detail previous to this time."

"You mean that you think she has eloped with Jay?"

"I don't think, Gates; I *know*. I dropped into the city clerk's office on my way over here today and discovered that Jay and Miss Edgerly had been granted a marriage license. Has Miss Edgerly's probable location now been made beautifully plain to you?"

"She is in Worcester with Jay's aunt?"

"Surely, and she is now Mrs. Jay. Can you not now figure out a theory in regard to the robbery that will be a little different from the one you have been following?"

Gates regarded him with a puzzled face. "Do you know, Sawyer," he said at last, "that you employ such confoundedly queer methods I can never be sure whether you are joking me or whether you are in earnest. I have had a theory all along, and I thought you were working on the same one; but this piece of information opens up an entirely new possibility."

"And that possibility is what?"

For a few moments Gates sat idly drumming on his desk with a pencil while he appeared to be carefully revolving the matter in his mind. Then he said slowly: "Well, this theory seems simple enough in conception. Edgerly was determined that his daughter should marry Jabez Rhodes, a man whom we can easily forgive her for despising. On the other hand she was in love with Jay and was determined to marry him at any hazard. They arranged their plans, secured their license and slipped away to Worcester, where they were married. Before going, however, Jay, who knew of the money in Edgerly's safe, determined to take it and thus enrich himself by fifty thousand dollars, and to take revenge on Edgerly for numerous injuries, at one blow. When Edgerly left the bank to see his daughter on the train for Springfield, Jay slipped back into the bank, secured the money and made away with it. He then got on board the same train for Springfield that carried Miss Edgerly, and they left the train together at Worcester. Jay then hurried back, prepared to work the old bluff of being on hand when the loss was discovered, and thus avoid suspicion."

When Gates had finished speaking Quincy stared incredulously at him for some time. "Great Scott, Gates," he said finally; "that isn't worthy of you. Really it isn't. Here you've worked out a theory

that the poorest amateur would despise utterly because you have completely lost sight of the most important details of the case. If this theory is true as you have mapped it out, then who choloroformed Edgerly and worked the other high jinks at the bank? That took place, you know, after he had returned from the train. No, Gates, I am afraid we must discard this theory as being worthless."

"Just a moment, Sawyer," Gates interposed with a grin. "I did not intend the latter part of that theory of mine to be taken seriously. But, aside from that, so long as Edgerly was chloroformed early in the evening, is it not possible that Jay may have followed Miss Edgerly on a later train?"

"Yes, but what would have been his object? He would hardly have gone to all the trouble entailed in chloroforming Edgerly if he could have merely taken the money and walked out of the building while Edgerly was absent."

"There are still two possibilities, Sawyer. One is that he may not have dared to walk out of the building while the other clerks were there, for fear of being noticed, and the other possibility is that he may have looked upon the chloroform method as being safer. The average person would argue, as you do, that Jay would not have taken all the trouble entailed, and that, therefore, somebody else

must be responsible. Have you a different theory, Sawyer?"

"Why, yes, one which varies somewhat from yours. It will be necessary for me to talk with Edgerly again, though, before I can demonstrate it, or even fully explain it. Suppose you arrange with Edgerly to give us an appointment for the latter part of this afternoon, and to have Jabez Rhodes present also. You might fix it by telling him that we have found his daughter and will bring her home at that time. In the meanwhile I shall run out to Worcester and see if I can induce Mrs. Jay to return with me."

At four o'clock that afternoon Inspector Gates was ushered into Gorham Edgerly's library, to find present both Edgerly and Jabez Rhodes. Edgerly greeted him with a somewhat cool bow, but had nothing to say, seeming, as Gates noted, much agitated. In fact, so great was his evident perturbation that he seemed unable to remain seated in any particular spot, but was continually jumping to his feet and striding to one of the windows, from which he would eagerly search the faces of all persons within range of his vision. Rhodes, on the other hand, remained utterly motionless, his shiny black clothes, shrunken limbs and short neck giving him much the appearance of a venerable cricket crouched in an out-of-the-way corner. His piercing gray eyes,

which peered through the lenses of his spectacles, were the only indications of life to be found about him.

It was nearly half an hour later that Quincy appeared at the house, coming alone, to Edgerly's unquestionable disappointment.

"Didn't you find her?" Edgerly's voice betrayed the first sign of emotion that Quincy had noticed in it.

"Yes, she returned with me. She is at present in one of the hotels down town and will come here a little later. You see, there are certain complications which I wished to smooth over before bringing her home."

At the words Edgerly looked up sharply, and even Rhodes appeared to take an increased interest in the subject.

"Your daughter, Mr. Edgerly," said Quincy, carefully studying the effect of the information, "returns as Mrs. Herbert Jay. She does not yet know that her husband is in jail."

Edgerly collapsed into a chair, his face gone suddenly white and his eyes staring strangely. Rhodes, however, maintained his impassivity, not a single muscle of his face appearing to twitch with either surprise or concern.

"Don't you think, Mr. Edgerly," Quincy continued, "that your daughter's husband should be

released from jail, and that the charges you are pressing against him should be dropped?"

Edgerly appeared to hesitate, and it was evident that his love for his daughter and some other powerful force were contending for the mastery. Before he could fight the matter out with himself, however, Rhodes interrupted with the first words he had spoken since Gates entered.

"You must remember, Edgerly," came his hard, chilly tones, "that your daughter disobeyed you in refusing to marry me, and, therefore, I hardly see why she should expect either mercy or help from you. Furthermore, it was my money which was stolen, and I shall feel it my duty to press the case against Jay, even if you don't."

At the conclusion of the words Quincy whirled on him. "No, you will not press the charge, Mr. Rhodes, for the simple reason that Jay did not steal your money and you know it! Furthermore, your money was never stolen at all; and, to cap the whole business, I strongly doubt if there was ever anything other than slips of worthless paper in the package which Mr. Edgerly's safe contained!"

The words brought Edgerly half out of his chair, with face purpling and the cords of his neck swelling, while even Rhodes temporarily lost his poise and glared craftily at Quincy.

"May I ask, Mr. Sawyer, why you think we

should perform such a strange prank?" Rhodes's voice maintained its icy quality.

"The reason is very simple, sir! You wished to marry Mr. Edgerly's daughter, and you wished to get Jay out of your way in order that you might do so. You, therefore, conceived the scheme — I say *you,* because the whole idea savours of your principles — of having Jay convicted of robbery and thus removing him from your path and breaking Miss Edgerly's spirit at the same time. By a lucky coincidence Jay got ahead of you, and was married to Miss Edgerly just as you prepared to spring your trap. The conception of the scheme, Mr. Rhodes, was all right; but its enactment was horribly crude! Bah! Two schoolboys could have arranged a better chain of circumstances than those which you and Mr. Edgerly presented. It was evident from the very first that this entire robbery was a hoax.

"See here, Mr. Rhodes; did you ever watch a physician while he was administering an anæsthetic? Did you ever note the length of time necessary to produce complete anæsthesia? And, if you ever have seen those things, do you imagine for a moment that one man could sneak up behind another man and chloroform him in the simple manner which Mr. Edgerly claims? It might, perhaps, have been accomplished if Mr. Edgerly had been

asleep; but never, you may rest assured, while he was awake. Consequently, after hearing Mr. Edgerly's account of the chloroforming, I made up my mind that the story was false throughout.

"Then, too, Mr. Edgerly told of having shouted repeatedly for the watchman after he had regained consciousness. Did you notice, Mr. Edgerly, how easily Gates summoned me, later in the evening, when he stood in your office and I was in the very place that had previously been occupied by the watchman? My examination of that room was a pretence arranged for making that very discovery.

"Just which of you took the package from the safe I am not prepared to say, although I have an idea that you took it, Mr. Rhodes. Mr. Edgerly must have had help in tying himself to his chair, and it consequently seems probable that he admitted you to the bank, and then, after you had carried out your plans, you let yourself out. You have not one single leg to stand on, if you undertake to press your case against Jay, and the inevitable result will be that the entire affair will come back to perch on your shoulders. Now, then, what are you going to do about it?"

At the conclusion of Quincy's remarks Rhodes fidgeted uneasily in his chair for a moment. Then, rising on his thin, tottering legs, he strode across

the room and thrust his snarling, wrinkled face squarely beneath Quincy's eyes.

"Bah!" he snarled. "What do I care for one chit of a girl? I can get another. My money will buy me anything! And, remember this, you meddling busybody; I'll lay for that crawling, miserable Jay, and some day I'll get him in my power. And, when I do, I'll have my pay for all this; yes, I'll get my pay down to the last penny he has, and then send him to the penitentiary!"

For a moment Quincy stared in disgust at the senilely evil old face. He noted the cruel eyes, yellowed fangs and curling lips and, then, unable to subdue the wrathful disgust that rose within him, he stretched forth one powerful hand and swung the old miser clear off his feet, shaking him from side to side as a terrier shakes an unlucky rat. He smiled grimly as the old man's wig flew in one direction and his numerous other toilet accessories littered the floor; but he did not relax his grip in the least until Rhodes' shrill squeals grew weaker from loss of breath. At last, jamming Rhodes forcibly against the wall, and holding him upright, he stared into the terror-stricken eyes.

"By right, you old reprobate," he growled, "I should have you arrested for conspiracy. I am going to let you off on that charge because I wish this matter to be hushed up; but, if you ever at-

"JAMMING RHODES FORCIBLY AGAINST THE WALL . . . HE STARED INTO THE TERROR-STRICKEN EYES."

tempt anything whatsoever against Jay, I swear by all that's holy that I shall drive you into your last ditch and see to it that you end your days behind prison bars. And I solemnly assure you that, should such an occasion ever arise, your money will be of no avail to you, even though your riches are as great as those of Crœsus. Now, go!" he commanded, suddenly loosing his hold and stepping back. "Go, before I forget myself entirely and — and — er — spank you!"

Rhodes needed no second invitation. With an alarmed glance over his shoulder, he squirmed out of Quincy's reach and scuttled through the door, while Quincy, completely overcome by the spectacle, sank into the nearest chair and shook with explosive laughter. After a time, however, he regained his composure, and turned once more to Edgerly.

"My suggestion to you, Mr. Edgerly," he said, "is this. Drop your absurd charge against Jay at once before the affair becomes noised abroad. Reinstate him in your bank, receive your daughter as you should receive her, and break off whatever friendship you may have with Rhodes."

For a moment only Edgerly hesitated, gripping the arms of his chair until the backs of his hands showed white. Then, leaping to his feet, he extended his hand.

"I'll do it, sir. By Jove, I'll do it," he exclaimed. "I would never have consented to this thing in the first place if I had been in my right mind; but I needed the money that Rhodes agreed to hand over to me, and he influenced me in that way."

Quincy ignored the extended hand. "You cannot justify your act, sir," he said coldly. "All you can do now is to make restitution in so far as it lies in your power. In fact, I am not certain but what you need the treatment given Rhodes as badly as he needed it himself, but we can let that pass if you will immediately get Jay out of the station house. Then we can go to your daughter."

V

THE AFFAIR OF LAMSON'S COOK

QUINCY sauntered slowly along the street, enjoying the sunny warmth of an early June morning. Few cases had been presented to him of late, and the resulting inactivity had served to stock him, both mentally and physically, with unusual energy. His keen eyes, restless with inaction, flashed hither and thither over the small throng of hurrying pedestrians, as though in search of something on which to exercise his peculiar talents. But the people surrounding him seemed productive of anything other than mysteries. They comprised mainly the usual throng of hurrying clerks, stenographers and other employees, all rushing toward their individual desks or stations, and whatever secrets might be buried in their minds were for the present, at least, successfully forgotten or covered. With a deep sigh at the possibility of another day of quiet and solitude, Quincy turned slowly in the direction of his own office, but paused sharply as the sound of a call reached his ears.

"Sawyer! Oh, I say, Sawyer!" came the half-

suppressed shout, and Quincy's eyes, flashing sharply over the street, instantly picked out the source of the call.

Slowly bearing down on him, through the press of market wagons, trucks and other early morning vehicles, came a handsome touring car. At the wheel sat an impassive French chauffeur and in the tonneau a fat, puffy little man danced frantically about for all the world like a huge bullfrog in a net. Quincy recognized the man as Herbert Lamson, prominent clubman, first-nighter, and society leader in general, and wondered vaguely what unseemly occurrence could have brought Lamson out at that early hour of the morning. He halted and stood smiling interrogatively as the machine drew up at the curb.

"Oh, I say, Sawyer!" Lamson puffed, as soon as the car had been brought to a halt. "It's lucky I found you, you know. I want you to come right out to my house without a moment's delay. We've had a frightful occurrence there. Frightful!"

"Which house?" Quincy inquired, ignoring the door which Lamson held invitingly open.

"My country house, Sawyer. The one at Beverly. Come right away, won't you? It's an awful thing and I simply must have help!"

"But, what is it? What has happened?" Quincy questioned, not relishing the idea of being dragged

down to Beverly to discover who had thrown a pebble through one of Lamson's plate glass windows, which possibility, knowing Lamson as well as he did, Quincy deemed not improbable.

"It's murder, Sawyer, murder!" Lamson spluttered, spitting out the word as though it choked him and gazing helplessly at Quincy through his round, sheep-like eyes. "Somebody brutally murdered my cook last night — and she could cook the best fish dinners I ever tasted."

Quincy barely suppressed a desire to laugh at the incongruity of the two statements, knowing well that the only method of endearing oneself to Lamson was through the medium of the latter's digestive system. For a moment only he hesitated, then, swinging into the car beside Lamson, he settled back for the ride to Beverly.

"Now, Lamson," he said, when the car had drawn away from the midcity tumult, "give me some of the details of this case so that I may be prepared to act when we arrive. Just when, so far as you can tell, did the murder take place?"

"I can't say just when," Lamson informed him. "I was away from the house from five o'clock in the afternoon until late last night. It might have been done while I was away, or after I returned, because she was not discovered until early this morning. One of the maids, according to custom,

went to call her in time to prepare breakfast, and found her dead. I was immediately notified and, not knowing what else to do, I hurried up after you. I'll catch that murderer, Sawyer, if it costs me my entire fortune," he broke off savagely. "That woman was a downright shrew, but she could cook, — Lord bless you! she could cook! And now I must spend a year or two hunting another cook, and I shall probably be obliged to live on all manner of horrible dishes during my search. I know I can never find another who will be able to cook fish the way she could!" He seemed saddened, almost to the point of breaking down, at the last thought.

"I understand, Lamson," said Quincy, after a protracted coughing fit behind his hand. "But I want to get the facts of the case itself, the murder. How was she murdered, and do you suspect anybody? Now, give me something of that sort to work on. First, what was her name, where did she come from, and how long had she been with you?"

"Her name," said Lamson in a saddened voice, apparently engendered by the thought of the fish dinners which were to be his no more, "was Mrs. Elizabeth Buck. She had been with me as cook for about twelve years, but I have no idea where she came from originally. You see, I was obliged to

hire her rather hastily at a time when I was giving a dinner and my other cook — "

"Yes, yes," Quincy hurriedly interrupted, "but had she any relatives or friends who wrote to her, or with whom she visited?"

"Nobody of whom I ever heard. In fact, from the time when I first engaged her, I do not believe she has been away from my house a single day. Her sharp temper would rather preclude the possibility of her having any friends, and I doubt if there was a person in the world, outside myself, in whom she felt the slightest interest."

"Now," said Quincy approvingly, "you are started right. Give me all the details you can up to the time when the body was discovered."

"Well, she was a woman who, as I said, apparently had neither friends nor acquaintances. Therefore, I do not think that the affair occurred because of some old grudge a previous associate may have owed her. Since I have been talking with you a possibility, which hitherto had not occurred to me, has come into my mind. I paid her well, very well, and, as I never knew of her spending much money at a time, she must have been able to lay by quite a bit in the last twelve years. Of course she may have kept her money in a savings bank, but it is equally possible that her distrustful nature led her to hide it somewhere about her house. She did not

room in my house, but in a little cottage which stood on the grounds, living by herself. Now the possibility I mentioned, and which, at the time when I left, had not been investigated, is that somebody may have murdered her for her money. Damn 'em! I'd have given them an equal amount gladly, if they'd only have let her live to cook for me.

"In person she was a small woman of perhaps fifty, although she was so wizened and dried-up by nature that she might have been either more or less. In fact, her appearance has never changed since I have known her. She was very small in stature, and, although I think she would have been capable of putting up a stiff fight, she would have been no match, of course, for an ordinarily strong man. Last night, the servants say, she retired to her cottage at her usual time, and nothing was heard of her during the evening. Very early this morning one of the maids went to call her and, receiving no response to her knock, pushed open the door and found the body.

"The woman had been stabbed, and the place was in a terrible state of disorder; but that part of it you can see for yourself when we get there. I left orders that nobody should enter the building, and that nothing was to be disturbed until I returned. On making the discovery, the maid rushed from the house screaming, and fell on the lawn in

a dead faint. I was at once called, and, by the time the maid had regained her senses, I was on the spot. As soon as she had told her story I looked hastily into the woman's house to verify the facts, and hurried to Boston to secure your services. You are, of course, to do whatever you think best in the matter, and I give you full authority to act in any way you may deem necessary on my premises."

For a few moments, following the recital, Quincy was silent, knowing well that little further information was to be gained until he should arrive at the grounds and be able to examine the premises in person.

"How did you come to employ the woman when you had absolutely no knowledge of her, or of her previous state of life?" he asked, after a time.

"Why, I told you that I was obliged to have a cook in great haste at that time," Lamson protested. "She was well recommended as a cook by the employment agency, and consequently I hired her with very little question. I have never had any trouble whatever with her and, in the twelve years, I had come to look on her as being scrupulously honest and trustworthy in every way. But wait, we are nearly there now, and you will soon have an opportunity to judge this matter at first hand."

Quincy stared unseeingly at the low and dirty

wooden buildings which lined the street along which the machine was speeding. The case appealed strongly to him as it had been rehearsed, and he could not suppress a certain intangible feeling that it would grow yet more interesting as it progressed. Of course, he considered, in case of a murder for the purpose of robbery, at the possibility of which Lamson hinted, the case would undoubtedly degenerate into a mere police routine affair in which he could take no part. But, on the other hand, the very air of mystery which appeared to surround the woman, herself, gave a vague promise of possibilities into which he would be able to dig and search to his heart's content. He glanced once more at his surroundings, and discovered that they were now in more open country and that the dirty little buildings had given place to the more imposing residences of Beverly's summer colony. The machine turned abruptly, and he discovered that they were rolling up a curved driveway to what was undoubtedly Lamson's house.

A much agitated servant hurried up to the machine as they alighted and, after a somewhat doubtful glance at Quincy, reported in a rapid undertone:

"The police are here, sir, and the medical examiner. I told them of my orders against allowing anybody to enter the cook's house until you had

returned with a detective, and they consented to wait. They are down under the tree by the house now."

"All right, Higgins," Lamson replied, turning once more toward Quincy. "Now, Mr. Sawyer, if you will come right down we can all examine the rooms together. I am somewhat surprised that the police consented to await my return. They are usually little inclined to await the convenience of a private detective, are they not?"

"Unfortunately, they are," Quincy replied with a dry smile. "The police in a large city would not have done so, under any circumstances; but it is probable that in these smaller towns the police and all other municipal officials are more ready to pay heed to the wishes of their wealthy residents. It is out of respect to you, and through no regard for me, that they are waiting."

Quincy carefully examined the exterior of the cook's former place of residence as they approached. It was a pretty little cottage, painted a conservative white and standing in a location considerably removed from the residence of Lamson himself. The cottage was of fair dimensions, containing, he judged, about six rooms; but it appeared dwarfed because of the giant horse-chestnut trees which towered above it on every side. From beneath one of these trees three men arose, and came forward to

meet them, Quincy having an excellent opportunity to examine the officials as they advanced.

The foremost of the trio he judged, by reason of the bountiful supply of gold braid sprinkled over his uniform, to be the chief of the local department. The second, who followed at a respectful distance, was evidently a member of the force, while the last, a rather small, dark-faced man in plain clothes, was undoubtedly the medical examiner. As Quincy and Lamson halted before the house, the chief bustled up to them, a smile, which was evidently intended to be courteous, playing across his ordinarily pompous features.

"We have been waiting some time for you, Mr. Lamson," he remarked; "but under the circumstances we were willing to delay our work until your return. The affair undoubtedly will prove a simple one, and it is too bad you have gone to the expense of importing a private detective." With the concluding words he shot a brief, but unfriendly, glance in Quincy's direction.

Lamson made no reply to the speech, other than by a brief nod of recognition, and, stepping quickly to the door, he unlocked it and threw it open, standing aside to allow the entrance of the officials. Like a pack of hounds unleashed the local men dived through the door, and into what was apparently a living room, Quincy and Lamson following in their

rear. On entering the room all paused abruptly and stared about them, the scene well warranting the sudden halt.

The room was, indeed, in a terrible state of disorder. Furniture had been overturned, some had been broken, all had been misplaced, and on every hand were to be seen signs of violence and confusion. The main feature, however, was to be found in the figure of a little woman who lay almost in the very middle of the room. The body lay face down, the hair dishevelled and the clothing somewhat disarranged from the struggle, while from its side and several inches below the left armpit protruded the hilt of a heavy and strong-bladed knife. There were very few signs of blood, as the wound had evidently bled inwardly; but the scene was ghastly enough without that.

Exercising the prerogative of his office, the medical examiner strode forward and knelt at the side of the body, gently turning it over. As he did so the watchers instinctively started, for on the woman's face was revealed such an expression of fierce and malignant hatred as it is seldom the misfortune of any person to gaze on. The lips were drawn back in a snarl of rage which left exposed the worn and ragged teeth, and the eyes, fixed and staring, seemed to hold in their depths a fury scarcely human.

"Lord!" muttered Lamson, repressing a shudder. "She surely didn't die with any love of man in her heart."

The medical examiner grimly held up the knife. "From here on it's your work, gentlemen," he observed. "Make what you can of this."

The chief took the knife, and all stared curiously at it. It was an ordinary wooden-hilted knife of the kind to be found in any market and, from the thinness of the blade, it had evidently known long service and many grindings. After nodding his head over it several times, the chief passed the knife on to Quincy with the air of a man wishing to be courteous, although hardly recognizing the possibility of any value in the act. To Quincy, judging from his expression, the knife meant much or nothing. He glanced at it keenly, turned it over several times and then, without comment, returned it to the chief.

The search for clues then started in earnest, the two members of the regular force burrowing amidst the debris in the room like terriers after a rat. They pulled open every drawer, peered under or through every article of furniture, and minutely examined every square inch of space in the room. Now and then the chief would pause to glance speculatively at Quincy, as though in fear that the private detective might stumble on a clue that the regulars had overlooked. After each scrutiny, however, he invariably

returned to his search, appearing satisfied that Quincy's aimless wanderings would net him nothing of value in the way of clues.

"By the way, Chief," Quincy interrupted at length, "may I inquire as to what it is that you expect to find in this room?"

The chief eyed him suspiciously before replying. "Well, it's not customary to hand our suspicions to outsiders, but, as you are, in a way, one of us, I don't mind telling you. Of course we are looking for possible clues which the murderer may have left behind, but primarily I want to discover whether or not the old woman's hoard of money is missing."

"I see, Chief; but, unless we know, which we do not, where the money was hidden, how are we to be able to tell whether or not it is gone? We suspect, of course, but we do not know, that there was money hidden in the house. It is hardly likely that the woman would have kept any quantity of it hidden away in a bureau drawer. It strikes me that if she had money to hide she would have placed it in a more secret hiding-place — under the floor boards, behind a stone in the cellar wall, or in some similar crevice. We might search a week and still not find the place. And, even if we should chance to find the money, all we should have gained would be a knowledge that the murderer did not take it. Look over the room. There was no search for money pre-

vious to our coming. That furniture was all disarranged during the struggle. Either the murderer knew exactly where the money was hidden, and took it from its hiding-place, or else he was actuated by some other motive, entirely, and had neither thought nor regard for the money that might be here."

The chief listened stolidly to Quincy's summing up of the matter; but he seemed unimpressed. "You are at liberty to follow any method you please in the conduct of your search," he said coldly; "but the regular police must act under my orders, and I see no necessity for changing the orders because of your ingenious theory. I am experienced in these matters, Mr. Sawyer, and I judge that you are not; so please don't confuse my men by advancing any other theories. This murder was for the purpose of robbery, and for no other purpose under the sun."

Quincy meekly accepted the rebuff without reply, but there was a peculiar smile playing about his lips as he turned away. Apparently undisturbed, he wandered nonchalantly out of the room, with Lamson, angered at the treatment his special representative had received, trailing behind. To the remaining rooms on the first floor Quincy paid only the most casual notice, doing little more than to glance into each before ascending the stairs. On the second floor, however, his interest appeared to awaken, es-

pecially when the woman's chamber had been reached.

Once within the chamber his aimless wandering ceased, and his every movement appeared to take on a definite purpose. He glanced sharply over the walls, carefully scrutinizing the few pictures with which they were adorned, after which he stepped briskly to the bureau, where he conducted a most minute examination of the contents of every drawer. Once he paused and held up a small packet before the gaze of Lamson, grinning as he did so.

"I imagine our friends down-stairs would be interested in this," he remarked.

"What are they?" Lamson questioned eagerly.

"Bank books. Your late cook evidently patronized several savings banks, instead of hoarding her money as has been suspected. I'll place them back where they were, and let the police discover them when they reach this point in their search. At their present rate of speed they should reach this room in a day or two."

For some little time, after the discovery of the books, he remained before the bureau, searching every nook and cranny of it. At last, appearing vastly dissatisfied with the result, he arose and stood meditatively in the middle of the room, allowing his eyes to run rapidly over first one article of furniture and then another.

"Did your cook have a trunk when she came here?" he questioned abruptly.

"I don't think so," said Lamson slowly, as he strived to remember the event of twelve years previous. "No, I am sure she brought with her one of those old-fashioned canvas extension bags. It must be around here somewhere."

Quincy's interest appeared to renew itself at the information, and he was immediately deep in his search again. At last, with much shuffling and scuffling of his feet, he emerged backward from a dark nook in the closet, dragging after him the described bag. Placing it on the floor, he arose and stared at Lamson through eyes shining with eagerness.

"Lamson," he said, "I expect to find the clue I want in that bag. There is one thing that no woman, and few men for that matter, regardless of station in life, is without in these days. It may be only the most tantalizing of clues which I shall be able to make nothing of, but I'll stake my reputation that it's there."

With no further explanation he threw back the cover of the bag, dropped on his knees before it, and dug into its contents. For several moments there was no sound save his eager breathing, echoed by the puffing breaths of Lamson, and the swishing of articles being hastily overturned in the bag. Then, with an almost explosive exhalation, he started back

and sprang to his feet, three small articles in his hand.

"I have it, Lamson," he exclaimed. "I have it. Now, what can we make of it?"

He strode to the nearest window, with Lamson scuttling at his heels, and held up to the light three small, unmounted photographs. "You see, Lamson," he said, "every woman has a certain degree of sentiment in her makeup. Consequently, in these days of plentiful photographs, there is scarcely a woman anywhere who does not possess photographs of her early home, or associations surrounding it. Here we have the photographs, but, as they are not mounted, and bear no photographer's seal, their value to us will depend on our ability to recognize the places represented."

Lamson stared incredulously. "But my dear Sawyer," he protested, "those photographs may represent scenes hundreds or thousands of miles from here. How are we to recognize them?"

Quincy lowered the photographs and turned impressively. "Lamson," he said, "I have not yet looked at those photographs closely, but mark my words when I tell you that they will represent scenes within a radius of fifty miles. That woman was not a traveller."

Without further comment he raised the photographs once more and studied them carefully.

The first depicted a woman, beyond doubt Mrs. Buck at a period much earlier in her life, standing before a small cottage of the style of architecture most frequently seen among the houses of the ocean fishermen. The second showed a large open boat, a trawler, fully manned, and lying just below a wharf with the wharf's buildings visible in the background. The last showed two fishermen standing on the steps of a hotel, and holding between them a strange monster of the deep, while, from above, curious guests peered down from over the balcony rail.

"There, Lamson, I think we have our clue."

"But how? What in the deuce is there to all that stuff that shows you anything?" Lamson was fairly staggered with bewilderment.

"Look here!" Quincy flipped the second photograph into view. "That trawler indicates, as do all three photographs, a fishing community. Now look at the buildings in the background. On the central building you can dimly distinguish the sign of the fishing company; The Bay State Codfish Company. Now look at this third photograph. Above the fishermen's heads is the sign of the Puritan Hotel. By coupling those two names we have our clue. Both the Bay State Codfish Company and the Puritan Hotel are located in Gloucester. In the photograph of Mrs. Buck herself we find her stand-

ing before a typical fisherman's cottage. Therefore, does our clue not point toward Gloucester as a starting-point in our search for the woman's identity and that of her murderer? I also have another clue, but I shall leave that out of the matter for the present."

"Then you will go to Gloucester?" Lamson questioned.

"At once, although I would suggest that you do not mention the fact to the police. It might only serve to further muddle their brains, and they are sufficiently at sea in regard to this case already."

"You may use my car for the trip if you want to," Lamson volunteered immediately.

"No, I thank you. I prefer to go in the train. I shall be pleased to have your car take me to the station, though, if that will not inconvenience you."

As the pair descended the stairs they paused a moment to gaze at the activities of the police. The room remained in much the same condition as when they had originally viewed it, except for the fact that the body had been removed, thus doing away with the most gruesome feature of the case. Seeing them, the chief paused for a moment.

"Giving up so early in the game, Mr. Sawyer?" he inquired, a slightly sneering accent in his voice.

"Not exactly giving up, Chief," Quincy replied, ignoring the tone. "But my business temporarily

calls me elsewhere, and, for the present, I shall be obliged to absent myself. I expect to return here later on, though, unless in the meantime you have been able to solve the mystery. You have found no trace of hidden wealth as yet, I suppose?"

"No, we have found nothing, but there must be some clue to it somewhere. I am about to act on your suggestion and search the cellar."

"Before you do that, Chief," said Quincy, smiling frankly, "I would suggest that you search the woman's chamber. There are some bank-books there which will be of interest to you."

"You mean that her money was deposited in a bank?" the chief demanded sharply.

"It was, and still is, in a bank, or in banks, to be more exact. I fear you will be wasting your time if you search farther for it here."

For a moment the chief stared silently, but at last a slow grin began to relieve the hard lines of his face. "Mr. Sawyer," he said, "you have put one across on us. I held you lightly in the beginning because, several times of late, my department has been considerably hindered by the actions of amateur detectives, and I took you to belong to the same class. I see you know your business, and I apologize for my former abruptness of speech."

The speech came as a complete surprise to Quincy, but he was not to be outdone in courtesy. "Chief,"

he said, "I accept your remarks in the spirit in which they were intended. Frankly, I am now starting out on a clue which I think will prove valuable. If I am successful I shall notify you of the fact on my return, and it is highly probable that we may be able to act together in the final scenes."

The chief regarded him with increased respect. "I shall be pleased to act with you if you are successful," he said simply.

In ten minutes time Quincy was seated in Lamson's car and hurrying toward the railroad station. Shortly afterward he was aboard a train for Gloucester and, bending over the three photographs, was carefully arranging his plans for the campaign he intended to wage in that peculiar city.

All that day, and throughout the night, Lamson and the chief anxiously awaited the return of Quincy or the coming of some word which would indicate his progress. The affair by that time had been spread broadcast through the medium of the press, and the grounds swarmed with reporters, to the disgust of Lamson, who cordially hated the notoriety which was thus being brought to his door. The second forenoon following the murder passed away without result in the desired direction, and Lamson, unused to the necessary tedium of a police investigation, and suffering from the strain involved, was at his wits' end when Quincy suddenly reappeared as

unostentatiously as he had departed. Lamson rushed eagerly from the house to greet him, the chief, no less eager, hurrying after, while the handful of reporters clustered around, listening intently for the first hint which might be incorporated in their several stories. Quincy waved them laughingly aside.

"Not yet, boys," he adjured them. "I have a good story for you, and you shall have it very shortly, but I must first make my report to Mr. Lamson."

Obediently the reporters fell back, accepting his assurance without question. Lamson and the chief reached him simultaneously and, above the hurried hum of the reporters' voices, rose Lamson's appeal:

"What luck, Sawyer? For heaven's sake tell me the result quickly."

Quincy took him soothingly by the arm. "It's settled, Lamson," he said quietly; "but my investigation has had a most remarkable result. A most surprising result! Come into the house, and I'll tell you all about it."

When they were seated in the library, or at least when the chief and Quincy were seated, Lamson being too nervous to do anything other than to fidget about the room, Quincy digressed slightly from the point of the matter in hand.

"I notice that you have gained considerable notoriety, Lamson," he said.

"Notoriety!" Lamson snorted the word furiously. "Notoriety! Yes, I certainly have, thanks to the press and its representatives outside! Look at the headlines which have been running. 'Wealthy Epicurean's Cook Murdered,' 'Lamson's Elysium Wrecked by Murderer,' and so on without end! Why in the world must I be dragged into the case in that manner?"

Quincy allowed himself a smile at Lamson's expense before proceeding. "You are merely the victim of circumstances, Lamson; but that was not what I intended to tell you. I wish to warn you that you are to receive still more notoriety because this case is about to produce one of the greatest sensations the press has had for years."

Lamson paled at the words, and his agitation increased perceptibly. "You don't mean," he stammered, "that you suspect me of the murder?"

"Oh, no, Lamson, great Scott, no!" Quincy hastened to assure him. "I have the murderer, and he has confessed. I merely wished to warn you that Mrs. Buck, regardless of her own identity, will still continue in the eyes of the public to be Lamson's cook, and as such she will be handled by the press. But sit down, man, nobody suspects you. I'll tell you my story at once, so that your mind may be

placed at rest in that direction at least. You know of the photographs which I discovered before going to Gloucester?" he inquired, turning toward the chief.

"Yes, Mr. Lamson told me of them," the chief informed him.

"Very well, then, I wished you to know of them before telling my story, because I desire you to be in possession of the several clues which led me to Gloucester. As you are aware, one of those pictures showed the wharf of the Bay State Codfish Company. Now, Chief, remember. Do you not recall that the knife with which the murder was committed was stamped on the hilt with the letters 'B. S. C. Co.?' From that fact I argued that the person connected with the Bay State Codfish Company in whom Mrs. Buck was interested years ago must still be there, and that Gloucester was the spot which I must search for the murderer. As I said before, I found him; but in order to place you thoroughly in possession of the facts I am going to retrogress twelve years and begin my story at that point. The discovery of the man after I reached Gloucester was a very simple act, so simple as to hardly be worthy of recognition in the story, while his confession followed almost as a matter of course. He is at present being held by the Gloucester police. I recognized him, Lamson, from his photograph. He is the man

on the right of that sea monster in the third picture; he also appears in the second photograph and, as the other does not, I naturally settled on him at once as the man whom I desired to find.

"But now for the story. Twelve years ago Amos Buck and his shrewish wife, Elizabeth, — your cook, Lamson, — lived in a small cottage at the far end of the Gloucester water-front. Amos was a trawler in the employ of the Bay State Codfish Company and, being a steady, temperate man, was regarded by the heads of his department as being one of their most reliable employees. But in his case, as in that of every other man, his home environment played a great part in the matter of his value to his employers. His wife's shrewish nature developed, and her constant nagging eventually began to play its part in his ultimate downfall, the result being that he finally became a steady patron of the nearest groggery, and it appeared that his complete degeneration would be merely a matter of time. Daily indulgence soon became protracted into sprees of a week's duration, and Mrs. Buck became more vituperative than ever.

"Then another link in the peculiar chain of circumstances was forged. Amos brought to his home a widowed cousin, Emma Bray by name, and insisted upon her taking up her permanent residence with himself and his wife. Mrs. Bray greatly re-

sembled Mrs. Buck in figure, although their features were vastly dissimilar, and their dispositions were as far separated as the poles. The cousin proved to be a pleasant, even-tempered woman, and she showed every desire to alleviate the constant friction between Buck and his wife.

"Her attempts at intervention only added to Mrs. Buck's fury, and within a few weeks Mrs. Buck had developed a hatred for both her husband and his cousin that was almost inhuman in its intensity. The demeanour of his wife at last had its effect on Buck himself, and, instead of meekly submitting to her verbal assaults, as he had done in the past, he soon commenced to reply in kind, with the result that the house became a veritable inferno. This continued until one day Buck's temper, grown ragged from the constant warfare, gave way entirely and he struck his wife, knocking her down. Then, overcome by the deed, and by the scenes which had led up to it, he rushed from the house to his favourite haunt in a cheap saloon.

"Although naturally a reticent man, his tongue soon became loosened by liquor and, when one of his associates pointed to a fresh cut on the side of Buck's head, inquiring as to its origin, he replied that his wife had made it, but that he had fixed her so she wouldn't do it again. The savage look with which he accompanied the words, and the dark hint

which seemed to be contained in them, caused the speech to be remembered. Shortly afterward Buck purchased a quart of raw rum and disappeared, going nobody knew where.

" The next morning he was aroused by the chief of police from the drunken slumber into which he had sunk behind the sheltering piles of a lumber wharf. The rough handling by the chief, together with the black looks and muttered threats of the small body of men who accompanied him, completely sobered Buck, and he demanded the reason of his arrest. The reply was unsatisfactory, being merely a gruff, ' Guess you know,' from the chief, and a volley of threats from the crowd, which was constantly growing larger.

" To Buck's surprise he was taken directly to his own house and, when led indoors, the last trace of liquor was driven out of him, and his surprise was turned to horror. The main room of the cottage was indeed in a terrible state, its floor and walls being covered with blood, its meagre furnishings broken and scattered, and its every appearance being as if a terrific battle had been waged within it. To make the nature of the crime which had been committed doubly sure, a blood-stained axe lay at one side of the room, where it had evidently been thrown by the fleeing murderer. But, whatever hopes the chief may have had of securing a confes-

sion from Buck by taking him to the place were speedily dashed, for Buck, instead of breaking down, appeared too utterly stupefied by the scene for speech of any kind.

"No trace of either woman had been found, and there was consequently nothing to do save to hold Buck on suspicion while the search for the bodies was being conducted. The search speedily bore fruit, for, within an hour of Buck's arrest, the body of a woman was found floating in the harbour. The features had been obliterated, being so badly hacked and battered as to make recognition impossible, but the clothing on the body was speedily identified as being that of Mrs. Buck. As no trace of the cousin was found it was decided that her body must have floated out to sea on the tide, and Buck was held, charged with the murder of both women.

"At the trial circumstantial evidence figured strongly in securing Buck's conviction, but there was also a beautiful train of circumstantial evidence in his favour. He pointed out that no blood-stains had been found on his clothing, and defied the prosecution to demonstrate a way in which he could have hacked a body as his wife's had been mangled and then have conveyed it to the water without having become stained with blood. He also showed a streak of genius by defying the police to show

conclusively that his cousin, Emma Bray, was really dead, as no trace of her body had been found. This part of the indictment was shortly dropped, and he stood accused of only the one murder, that of his wife.

"Of course his rash words in the saloon played an important part against him, but in his favour was the absence of blood-stains upon him and that fact, together with his drunkenness and the well-known frequency with which his wife had assaulted him, both orally and physically, saved him from execution. He was, however, convicted of murder in the second degree, and sentenced to imprisonment for life; but, even after Buck had been imprisoned, there remained many people who did not believe him guilty of the crime. Consequently, after he had served a term of years, a movement was set on foot to have him pardoned, the movement being eventually successful.

"After his release Buck returned to Gloucester and quietly resumed his old life, taking up his residence in his former home and again entering the employ of the Bay State Codfish Company. For two years he lived quietly and then, like a sudden thunderclap, came a piece of news which entirely upset his every thought. An associate came to him, giving him positive assurance that he had seen Mrs. Buck in Beverly, and had been told that she was

employed by a rich man as a cook. For days Buck brooded over that information, striving to make himself realize that he had not only been sent to prison for a crime which he had never committed, but also for one which, possibly, had never been committed at all.

"At last he could stand the strain no longer, and so set out one night for Beverly, to prove for himself the truth or falsity of the weird rumour. Before starting, moved by some instinct which even he himself cannot define, he secreted one of the company's knives in his coat, giving it no more thought after his departure from Gloucester.

"On his arrival in Beverly he had no difficulty in locating Lamson's estate and, proceeding here at once, he slipped about in the darkness, searching for the woman who might or might not prove to be his wife. He soon stumbled on the cook's cottage, and, peering through one of the lighted windows, he was able to clearly view the woman within and his feelings cannot be described when he realized that she was indeed his wife. Overcome by a blind, insensate fury, he made his way quickly to the front of the house, burst open the door, and confronted her.

"According to his story the woman showed no surprise at seeing him, but merely sat staring into

"PEERING THROUGH ONE OF THE LIGHTED WINDOWS, HE WAS ABLE TO CLEARLY VIEW THE WOMAN WITHIN."

his face with a smile of contempt on her lips. She made no reply when he accused her of allowing him to be falsely imprisoned, but continued to gloat over him with an air that aroused his already nearly uncontrollable fury to a pitch which it had never hitherto reached. He broke into savage denunciation of her, and, at last, stung her into replying to his charges. To his intense surprise she admitted them to be true. Not only that, but she boastfully asserted that she had killed his cousin out of revenge, and had then dressed the body in her own clothes to throw suspicion on him, had dragged it into the water and had then fled from the place in disguise. As she warmed up to the recital she added almost fiendish details, and through it all she continued to glory in her own success and Buck's resulting conviction.

"Naturally such a scene could have but one ending. Buck's temper became more and more savage and at the conclusion of her story he had reached a point but little, if anything, short of insanity. He told her he was going to kill her and that he would be justified in the act. The announcement sobered her and silenced her tongue; but, instead of screaming for help as he had expected her to do, she launched herself fiercely at his throat. You know the result. The struggle was short-lived, and at its conclusion Buck hurried from the place, making his

way immediately back to Gloucester, where I found him.

"Now, gentlemen," and with the words Quincy straightened impressively, "now we come to the sensational part of the whole affair. The question to be decided, and it is an important one, is: *Can Buck be punished for the murder?*

"At first glance the natural reply would be that he can; but, can he? Can the courts touch him in any way? When a man is tried and acquitted he cannot again be brought to trial for the same offence, even though it may afterward be shown conclusively that he is guilty. Therefore, can Buck be twice punished for the same offence? He has already paid the penalty, has paid in advance, so to speak, for the privilege of killing his wife. He was convicted when innocent, and, now that he is guilty, can he be again convicted of the same crime for which he has already paid the penalty which was legally demanded of him?

"I freely admit, gentlemen, that it is a question which I cannot answer, and you may rest assured that the press will eagerly await the decision of the Supreme Court if it is considered necessary to carry the matter that far."

VI

THE AFFAIR OF THE PLYMOUTH RECLUSE

THE door of Quincy's office was presided over by no two-headed Cerberus, and consequently it was possible for almost anybody to gain admittance at almost any time. Thus it was no surprise to Quincy when, glancing up through the smoke of his first cigar of the day, he discovered an early-morning caller standing in his doorway.

"Mr. Sawyer?" inquired the stranger politely.

Quincy replied in the affirmative and indicated a chair, into which his guest sank with seeming relief. "I have come," said the man, "to speak with you concerning last night's murder."

Quincy arched his eyebrows a trifle. "I have not yet had time to read the papers thoroughly," he said; "but it is highly possible that there have been several murders in one place or another during the night. Please be more explicit."

"I mean the Dobell murder," the stranger supplemented promptly.

"Oh," Quincy replied. "I have read of that case, at any rate. The murdered man was Sidney

Dobell of Plymouth. His body was found last evening hanging from a tree back of his house, but the discovery was made so late that the papers have given but a brief summary of the case and have suggested no clues."

"True," said the stranger, "and I have come to make arrangements, if possible, to have you investigate the case. I have been in company with Dobell for some little time, of late, and I feel that I may be able to throw some light on the case where nothing appears evident at present.

"My name is Frederick Armitage and I am a mining engineer, having been for several years past in the employ of Mr. Dobell, who owned a mine in Montana. Up to a short time ago I knew nothing whatever of him personally, and had, in fact, never seen him, as our business had always been transacted by correspondence. At the time where my story begins, however, the mine, as we say, ran out; that is, the vein we were working became exhausted and failed to pay running expenses. On account of general indications, however, I was certain that, by sinking a shaft in another portion of the property, we should strike a new vein. Consequently I wrote Mr. Dobell, telling him of this fact.

"Now, in order to better acquaint you with this case as it will develop, I must go back a bit and tell you something about Sidney Dobell himself, or, at

least, as much about him as I know. He was a man of about fifty, unmarried and a recluse in his habits. He lived in an isolated house in Plymouth, the house being completely hidden by a large grove of trees, which Dobell allowed to grow in their natural state, and with never a thought of pruning or cultivating them. With him lived his ward, Miss Ina Traill, not yet quite of legal age, and Dobell's ward since her earliest childhood. Dobell's fortune was very small, and he had never put it to any use, preferring to allow it to lie, and living on the small income which accrued from it. Miss Traill's fortune, on the other hand, was considerably larger than his, and it was really her money, instead of Dobell's, which was invested in the mine in Montana.

"Dobell thought a great deal of his ward, and, when he received my letter, announcing the failure of the mine unless sufficient money could be secured to finance the sinking of another shaft, he became greatly worried for fear that Miss Traill's fortune was about to be wiped out. He hastily secured the cash representing his own fortune, and started at once for Montana, ready to sink every cent he possessed in the effort to save his ward's money. His money was more than sufficient for the purpose, but, as we set stakes for the new shaft, we encountered another obstacle.

"The land next to our mine was owned by two

Italians, brothers named Francisco and Leo Santuzzi. When they discovered what we were about, they came up post-haste, claimed that we were driving stakes in their land, and produced a map to prove their statement. According to their map we really were on their land, but according to mine, which was the official map of the section, the proposed opening was well within our own boundaries. We argued the question for some time, the argument growing hotter and hotter, for Dobell, much to my surprise, proved himself to be a regular fire-eater, and refused to withdraw his stakes an inch.

"Then, before I had time to realize what was happening, Leo leaped for Dobell with a knife and, like a flash, Dobell drew a revolver and shot the Italian dead. Of course, Dobell was arrested by the sheriff, but he was quickly released, as it was easy to prove that he had acted in self-defence. For some unaccountable reason the news of the fight was spread broadcast, and that fact seemed to have a bad effect on Dobell. He grew melancholy and wished to leave the country as soon as might be possible. That desire became strengthened by Francisco, who threatened him openly and swore to have his life in payment for Leo's. Then, one evening, somebody shot at him, and that proved the last straw. He left the next day, bringing me with him,

as I was obliged to come east to purchase some machinery for the new work.

"On our arrival we went directly to his house in Plymouth, and there I made my headquarters while I was looking after the necessary purchases, running up to Boston daily while the shipments were being made. Yesterday marked the end of the third week of my stay in Plymouth, and I had made all arrangements for returning west today.

"Yesterday morning I came here to Boston to look after a few final details, not returning to Plymouth until late in the evening. I walked up from the station to the house, and was surprised not to find Dobell awaiting me, as he well knew that there were many important matters to be discussed. Miss Traill was there, as was the housekeeper; but neither of them could tell me anything of Dobell's whereabouts.

"I did not wait for him to return, but set out over his favourite walk in search of him, carrying a lantern, as it was very dark in the woods. I had gone some distance into the woods when I stumbled against an object a little to one side of the path and, on looking up, was horrified to discover that it was Dobell's body, suspended by the neck from a tree.

"I immediately started to take the body down and, finding that Dobell was unquestionably dead, I did so without disturbing the rope, which still hangs

in its original position. And now comes the most significant part of the story. That rope was a lariat such as cattlemen use, and I am morally certain that Dobell did not bring any such rope with him when we came back from the west. Therefore, it seems likely to me that Santuzzi must have followed us here, watched his chance, and then killed Dobell by means of the lariat."

As the man paused at the conclusion of his story, Quincy was able to ask his first question. "You know nothing whatever of Dobell's former history?"

Armitage shook his head. "Nothing. He has never told me a word concerning himself in other than a business way. The girl, I feel certain, knows little or nothing of his history, either. What his housekeeper, Mrs. Wilson, or his man of all work, known as Thomas, may know I cannot say, for they are as silent and uncommunicative as he always was himself. That it was his ward's fortune which had been invested in the mine, and that he would use all means in his possession to save her money, he told me himself; but, outside of that item, he has never trusted me with any of his personal history or business."

"Have you told your story to the police?" Quincy inquired.

"Yes, to the medical examiner and to the state

officer who has been detailed on the case. I imagine that the state officer agrees with me in my suspicion of Santuzzi, for he has sent telegrams west to make inquiries regarding the man's recent movements. I wish to have a direct representative in the case in addition to the police, though, as my time at present is valuable, and that is why I have come to you. Will you take it up?"

"Yes," said Quincy, rising and slamming down the top of his desk. "I shall take it up immediately. How soon may we get a train for Plymouth?"

Armitage consulted his watch. "In fifteen minutes, provided we can reach the station in that time."

The Dobell house in Plymouth stood, as Armitage had described, in the midst of a veritable jungle of trees and underbrush. The main body of surrounding woodland was covered with pine trees, but the woods were interspersed by numerous small clearings, all of which were heavily overgrown with bushes and young trees. The almost primeval appearance of the woodland gave to the house an air that was gloomy, indeed, while the appearance of neglect which surrounded it on every side added greatly to its uninviting aspect.

The interior of the house proved to be little more inviting in appearance than its exterior, being furnished in a style of many years ago, and with house-

hold goods that were rapidly falling into decay. Nor did the many peculiarities of the establishment fail to communicate themselves to the inmates, as Quincy soon discovered.

Miss Traill he found to be a young woman of rather careless appearance, who gave evidence of possessing a naturally charming and vivacious personality which had been dwarfed and subdued by her surroundings. That she was grieved at her guardian's death was evident; but her features maintained a strict impassivity beneath which it was impossible to look in any effort to fathom her thoughts. Mrs. Wilson, the housekeeper, was a middle-aged woman of a quiet and retiring demeanour, and Quincy passed her by with hardly more than a glance. But on Thomas, the man of all work, he focussed his attention strongly. Thomas, he decided, was entirely out of his element, and what mysterious tie held the man in the place he could not, for the time being, fathom. The man's quick, piercing eyes betokened anything other than a staid gardener or choreman, his bowed legs argued in favour of a familiarity with horses, and his lithe movements indicated unusual strength and agility. Thomas, Quincy decided, would bear investigation.

Armitage hurried the preliminary introductions as much as was possible, and then conducted Quincy

into an adjoining room, where the body of Sidney Dobell lay. As they entered, a man rose from a chair in one corner and came toward them, another turning at the same time from his position at the side of the body.

Armitage greeted the first man quietly. "This," he said, turning toward Quincy, "is Doctor Henderson, the medical examiner for this district."

Quincy glanced at the notebook in the doctor's hand, while acknowledging the introduction. "You have arrived at a decision?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes," the doctor replied. "It is a clear case of murder, by person or persons unknown, of course. The proof is this: the body was found dangling in air fully fifteen feet from the limb over which the rope had been stretched. Had the man dropped all that distance, as would have been necessary in a case of suicide, his neck would undoubtedly have been broken. As it is, he died from strangulation, which fact plainly proves that the work was done by other parties, namely the murderer, or murderers, as the case may be."

Quincy nodded gravely, and glanced questioningly in the direction of the second stranger in the room, at which he was immediately introduced to State Officer Burr. The state officer regarded Quincy with suspicion as the introduction was being made, and seemed inclined to return at once to his

work without commenting on the case. Quincy, however, forestalled that purpose.

"I see that you have a strong suspicion as to the identity of the criminal," he remarked casually.

The officer turned his cold eyes full on Quincy for several seconds, while he seemed to consider the import of the statement. "Well, perhaps," he at last admitted, grudgingly.

Quincy smiled and stepped to the side of the body, where he rapidly ran his eyes over the numerous minor details of the man's clothing. He carefully examined the shoes, going over them with minute care, but not appearing to find that for which he sought. He then raised the hands and commenced a lengthy investigation of their palms, seeming in this case to meet with success, as he nodded his head slowly at the close of the scrutiny and finally laid them back with an air of satisfaction. He then leaned sharply over the body, and withdrew a pin from the breast of the coat.

"What was fastened there?" he demanded abruptly of Armitage and the state officer collectively.

The state officer merely shook his head to signify his total ignorance of the matter, while Armitage's mouth popped open with astonishment. "Nothing, so far as I know," the latter replied, fairly stuttering with astonishment. "Even if there had been any-

thing there I was so excited when I found the body that I would not have noticed anything like that."

"How did you bring it in, — drag it?" was the next question.

"Well, half dragged and half carried it. You see he wasn't such a very big man."

Quincy appeared satisfied with the reply, for he returned at once to his work of investigation and his next question was addressed to the medical examiner.

"Doctor, why do you suppose Dobell chose this lonely spot for a place of abode?"

"He hated people," was the doctor's brief reply. "He was here when I first moved to this vicinity, and I have met him on countless occasions since; but never have I known him to directly address any person of the village. He would never go near a man if he could possibly avoid a meeting, and, even when he was forced into interviews, he would terminate them as quickly as he might."

"Do you think he was insane?" The question was asked carelessly, but there was a gleam of deep interest in Quincy's eyes.

"No, sir," the doctor replied with emphasis. "There was nothing insane about Sidney Dobell. I have no idea as to his reason for becoming a recluse; but you may be sure that the reason was well

formed in his mind, and that the reason was not a fanciful one, either."

"You do not know where he came from, I suppose?"

"No, I have no idea, nor do I think that anybody in this neighbourhood can tell you, unless, perhaps, it might be some member of his household. He appeared suddenly, bought this house, fixed it up to his liking and retired into it, remaining here ever since, like a bear hibernating in a cave."

"He must have been fairly familiar with firearms, Armitage, to be able to draw his revolver and shoot Santuzzi so quickly. Did he keep in practice through fear of some secret enemy?"

"Blessed if I know," Armitage replied slowly. "I never even knew that he carried a gun until he pulled it on Santuzzi."

"I never knew of his having been seen with a revolver about here," the doctor supplemented.

Quincy turned away and thoughtfully regarded the body. Dobell was a man of small stature and with a frame that seemed wasted, either by disease or hardship. His features were regular, and might once have been rugged; but now, not only did the face appear to be wasted, but it also bore indications of weakness, a condition which appeared to be more the result of a gradual decline than of natural origin. Had the man hidden himself through fear,

he wondered, or had there been some other reason which had gradually grown, through one cause or another, into a chronic state of fear? At last, unable as yet to satisfactorily answer his own question, he turned away and addressed Armitage.

"I believe I shall look over the grounds now, Armitage. I hardly expect that anything of particular advantage is to be gained in the house."

"You will be near at hand, will you not, so that we may call you in case we receive news of Santuzzi?" the doctor interjected quickly.

Quincy smiled and glanced toward Burr as he replied. "You can safely put Santuzzi out of your thoughts, Doctor. He had no hand whatever in the killing of Dobell. In fact, to pursue the question a little farther, I think I can safely say that Dobell was killed by a member of his own household."

"You mean Thomas?" the doctor gasped incredulously.

Before replying Quincy glanced covertly at Burr, and smiled inwardly as he beheld the state officer staring at him fixedly, and with every indication of intense interest in his face.

"I did not say that it was Thomas," Quincy replied carelessly, smiling over his shoulder as he strode out of the room.

"Now, Armitage," he continued, as they stood in the corridor, "I want first to see the spot where

Dobell's body was discovered, and it is quite probable that I may want to see a few other things afterward, so I think we had best hurry."

Armitage immediately led the way to the spot where the body had been found and where the lariat still hung in mute evidence of what had occurred. On arriving beneath the tree Quincy appeared, for the time being, to forget the very fact of Armitage's existence. He examined the ground about the tree with most minute care, scrutinized its trunk carefully, and at last climbed into it, paying particular attention to the limb across which the rope had been stretched. Finally, he tossed the rope carelessly to the ground, and descended after it, quietly untying the end which had been secured about the trunk of a smaller tree.

"Do you suppose the fellow threw this rope over Dobell's head while standing on the ground, or was he sitting up in that tree?" he inquired of Armitage.

"While standing on the ground, I should say," Armitage replied promptly. "It would have been too dark here for him to have been able to see a man passing, had he been sitting up there."

"Hm. Then I suppose Dobell calmly sat down and waited while the fellow threw the other end of the rope over that limb and tied it properly to this little tree. It would have taken considerable time, you know, because if a man were unable to see an-

other man from that limb how would he be able to see the limb from the ground?"

Without waiting for Armitage to formulate a reply, he turned away and fixed his attention on the path by which they had come. He seemed to attach much importance to whatever it was he expected to find there, for, with the utmost care, he searched every inch of the ground within the path or immediately adjoining it. At last his search appeared to be successful, for Armitage, seated some distance away, saw him pick some object from the ground. He examined it for several moments and then, putting it in his pocket, he turned about and retraced his steps to his starting point.

"What sort of land surrounds these woods?" he inquired at once.

"Swamp land," was Armitage's reply. "The swamp runs along the edge of the woods on every side except that occupied by the road. I know the land well because Dobell and I frequently went into it to shoot rail. Is there any particular section of it that you wish to see?"

"No," Quincy said thoughtfully, "I do not care to see it. Is it fairly passable for a person walking?"

"It would offer a safe, but not particularly pleasant passage, yes."

"That substantiates my theory and does away

with Santuzzi to a great extent," Quincy remarked. "It is hardly probable that Santuzzi, granting that he committed the murder, would have entered the grounds by the front way, even at night. It would be more likely that, having accustomed himself by observation to Dobell's habits, he would have slipped into these woods through the swamp, and have awaited the coming of his man. He could not have come through the swamp without having gathered up a greater or less amount of mud on his shoes and clothing, and that mud, after drying somewhat, would have dropped off. There are no flakes of mud lying about here on the ground nor has any been scraped off on that tree trunk. Therefore, exit Santuzzi as a factor in this case."

He paused for some time and considered the affair deeply, standing with head bowed and eyes fixed thoughtfully on the lariat. Then he turned about and, signing Armitage to follow him, made his way out of the woods and in the direction of the house. As they emerged from the shadow of the trees they encountered Thomas, and Quincy noted a sharp gleam of interest in the man's eyes as they fell on the lariat. He paused and stared at Thomas searchingly.

"Did you ever see this before?" he demanded, holding up the lariat for the man's inspection.

Thomas regarded him coolly and stood twisting

his heavy moustache a few seconds before replying. "I may have," he said finally, "but I don't keep track of all the ropes in the county."

"Well, you don't see many horsehair ropes in this county, do you?" Quincy snapped. "At any rate, I have little doubt but that you can imagine what it was last used for."

"I reckon you may have found it, out here a piece, in a tree," Thomas rejoined with an inscrutable smile.

"Your reckoning is good," Quincy replied, matching the man's smile with one even more inscrutable. "I wish to speak with this man privately, if you please, Armitage," he continued, remaining silent as Armitage passed on with a polite bow.

"Thomas," he said, when Armitage had passed out of hearing, "what sort of a central figure do you expect to make at a murder trial?"

The man's calm remained unruffled, and he continued to pull meditatively at his moustache. "I reckon I'd show up fairly well," he remarked. "It might be that I'd show up better than the man who jammed me into that position."

Quincy grinned broadly, for the very nonchalance of the man appealed to him with increasing strength. "You realize, of course, that you are the one man who can throw light on this case, so far as Dobell's past life is concerned," he con-

tinued. "Now, why should you continue to keep the secret buried? Dobell is dead, and cannot be injured by whatever story there may have been in his past life. Your telling the story can harm nobody, while your keeping silent may be the means of fastening the crime on an innocent man."

"Why so?" Thomas demanded coolly. "You detectives are so doggoned bright that you should be able to settle a small matter like this without any help of mine."

Quincy ignored the sarcasm, but his reply brought a sudden gleam of interest into the man's eyes.

"Oh, I know how Dobell came to his death," he stated with conviction. "That part of the affair is a mystery no longer." Then, noting an expression of mocking incredulity in Thomas' eyes, he bent forward and whispered a single word in the man's ear.

In an instant Thomas' entire attitude changed, and his expression of mockery gave way to one of deepening respect. "I reckon I may as well tell you what there is," he remarked. "If you savvied the other thing so quick, it would be only a matter of time before you got hold of the whole thing, anyway. Come into the house. It ain't such an awfully complicated affair, when you get right down to brass tacks on it."

Quincy was shortly ushered into the room which

had done duty as Dobell's office and, when within, Thomas, with the air of one perfectly familiar with the place, set before him a large sheet-iron strong box. He produced a key and flung back the lid, exposing to view a heterogeneous mass of papers and note-books.

"There," he said with gruff satisfaction. "Sid told me that if anything ever happened to him I was to show this stuff to the man I considered most entitled to see it. I reckon you're the one. Run through it all you please, and, if you happen to want me for anything, I'll be around the place here somewhere." He hesitated a moment, as though awaiting possible inquiries from Quincy, but, none being made, he turned on his heel and disappeared.

For two hours Quincy busied himself with the papers and note-books, scanning all with more or less interest and laying several aside for future reference. At last, having completed his examination of the papers, he rose in a leisurely manner, and snapped the lock of the strong box. Then, taking up such sheets as he had laid aside, he wandered in a seemingly aimless fashion out of the room and down-stairs to a sheltered corner of the piazza where he sank comfortably back to smoke. After a time the medical examiner appeared in the doorway and gazed at him, not without a trace of conscious superiority.

"Thinking over the case?" he inquired.

"No," Quincy replied easily. "The case is all settled, so far as I am concerned."

The examiner stared incredulously. "You mean that you have discovered the murderer?" he demanded.

Quincy thoughtfully blew a smoke ring, and watched it disappear. "Yes, I've found the murderer — and a few other things," he remarked cryptically.

The examiner was silent for a moment, and then he advanced his choicest bit of information. "Officer Burr has found the murderer, also, and has him up-stairs," he announced.

Quincy started abruptly. "Has him up-stairs!" he exclaimed. "The deuce he has! Why the blundering —" He interrupted himself to laugh heartily at some huge joke, which was utterly lost on the examiner.

"I don't see anything so strikingly funny," the latter interrupted, pointedly. "Officer Burr has the murderer up-stairs, and sent me down here to invite you up. He thought you might be interested in hearing the examination and a tracing of the final steps in the case."

"Oh, I should be," Quincy muttered incoherently, rising to his feet. "I shall be most interested and attentive. If he has succeeded in pen-

ning the murderer up, he has done a piece of work that will be well worth the careful attention of any man."

The examiner regarded him with cold disfavour, but said nothing as he led the way slowly up-stairs to a large room where, as Quincy entered, it seemed that the entire household had been assembled. Thomas grinned cynically in a corner, and tugged at his moustache, as was his inevitable custom. Miss Traill sat coldly indifferent to her surroundings, and stared silently at the ceiling; but Quincy noted that her face was pale and that her hands trembled. The crowning exhibit, however, was Armitage, who was perched on the edge of the centre table, and, to judge from his red face and flaming eyes, was suppressing with difficulty a desire to wax overwhelmingly profane.

Quincy said nothing as he entered, limiting his inquiries to a mute glance of question which he directed toward Officer Burr. The officer, puffed with importance, motioned toward a chair with condescending politeness, and Quincy silently assumed the position assigned to him.

"You will undoubtedly be interested to know, Mr. Sawyer," the officer announced ponderously, "that I have succeeded in sifting this matter out, and have settled on the guilty persons."

Quincy nodded respectfully, and elevated his eyebrows with an air of polite interrogation.

"Yes," the officer continued, "I have apprehended them and I thought that, before going into details, I would invite you up, as you will undoubtedly be interested in learning my methods of procedure. These persons," and a wide sweep of his hand included everybody in the room, with the exception of Quincy and the examiner, "are the criminals."

Quincy gazed solemnly at the accused trio. "It required an unusual number of them to do the work, don't you think?" he inquired meekly.

"No," Burr replied, proceeding briskly with his remarks. "Two of them are merely accomplices. Only one, the ex-cow puncher, did the actual work. It's very simple, you see. That man, Armitage, knew the value of Dobell's mine, while the woman was well acquainted with his personal affairs and his financial standing. They wanted to get him out of the way. Perhaps they intended to be married with the proceeds of their crime, or it may be that the three would merely have divided the money between them. It is probable, also, that the woman may have had personal reasons for wishing Dobell removed. I have not learned that, as yet. You will notice, however, that she wears a wedding ring."

"Confound you, sir," Armitage roared, leaping from his seat on the table and facing Burr. "Miss Traill has already told you that the ring was her mother's and that she wears it out of sentiment. She and I have absolutely no — "

"That will do," Burr yelled, advancing on Armitage in a threatening manner. "You are further incriminating yourself every time you open your mouth. Sit down, or take the consequences."

Instead of dropping quietly back into his chair Armitage seemed to welcome the "consequences," whatever they might be. Seizing the hand which Burr had thrust truculently against his breast, he whirled the astonished officer about and sent him reeling against the table. With a vicious growl Burr was back again almost at once, his fists swinging and the light of battle in his eyes. As soon as he came within reach of the engineer, one fist shot out, only to be lightly parried by Armitage, who replied in kind with a blow that floored Burr in a most decisive manner.

"If you want to fight," he growled, "I'm ready for you."

Before the conflict could be continued, however, Quincy had seized Armitage and forced him more or less gently into the corner beside Thomas, who sat grinning with delight at the discomfiture of Burr.

"Be quiet, you fool," Quincy growled. "Do you want to ruin yourself entirely?"

At a sign from Quincy, Thomas coolly reached out a powerful hand, and closed over Armitage's coat with a grasp that could not be broken, an assurance that further hostilities of a like nature would not be resumed.

"Your decision in this case has been reached, of course, after your having accepted as a fact the probability that Dobell was murdered, was it not, sir?" Quincy inquired of Burr, after the latter had somewhat regained his composure.

Burr stared at him as though unable to comprehend the reason for the question. "Such was most assuredly my conclusion," he replied.

"Well, but he wasn't murdered, you know," Quincy continued meekly.

At the words all present seemed too startled for immediate response, contenting themselves with merely staring in Quincy's direction as though doubtful of his sanity.

"By what reason do you make any such remarkable statement as that?" Burr demanded, finally, in a tone of angry disgust. "You admitted yourself earlier in the day that he was killed by a member of his own household."

"And so he was," Quincy persisted with quiet assurance. "He was killed by a member of

his own household, because he committed suicide."

Burr snorted angrily. "That's a likely conclusion," he snarled. "Didn't the doctor say that he couldn't have committed suicide because, if he had dropped all that distance, his neck would have been broken?"

"Yes, I know he did," Quincy retorted; "but I shall disprove his statement in good time. First, however, I want to go into Dobell's history a bit. As nobody here, with the exception of Thomas, is probably aware, Dobell began life as a rancher in the West. He lived on his cattle ranch with his partner, who was Thomas, and his sister, Miss Traill's mother. His sister was married from his ranch to another rancher named Jack Traill, and with him she lived for about two years. Their daughter was born and shortly afterward Traill degenerated from an honest rancher to a cut-throat and a drunken outlaw.

"He took to abusing his wife in a most shameful manner until she, unable to bear his abuse longer, took refuge with her brother and his partner. Traill followed her to the ranch in one of his drunken spells, and ordered her to return home with him, and her refusal to do so led to a fight between Dobell and Traill, during the progress of which Dobell shot and killed his brother-in-law. His

sister then took up her residence at his ranch; but, when her daughter was less than two years of age, she died, leaving the daughter to Dobell's care.

"Dobell, not knowing what else to do, came East in search of a place where his niece could receive a proper bringing up, and his partner accompanied him. They bought this place and settled down here, Dobell becoming a recluse and misanthrope, while his partner was looked upon as merely a man of all work, although in reality he was operating in the Eastern cattle market. As time went on Dobell became seized with a disease which gradually wasted his vitality, and reduced him from a once strong man to a cowardly, fussy invalid. His partner remained with him, first because of the progress he was making in the market, and later through loyalty, not wanting to desert his old friend in the hour of his need. Thus things led gradually up to the present climax, when Dobell, unable longer to stand the strain of his disease, committed suicide, with what results you already know. Thomas, gentlemen, is really a wealthy man and a skilful stock operator. His presence here, in the capacity which he has been supposed to hold, is a matter which only he himself can explain, and I doubt if he will consider it necessary to do so,"

"A very pretty story," Burr sneered, "but where is your proof of it."

"Right here," Quincy replied with unruffled calm, laying a package of papers on the table. "The story of Dobell's past life will be found in these papers as I have related it in brief. You may read the tale when you please."

"But you are not through yet," Burr continued. "Where is your proof that Dobell committed suicide?"

"Oh, as for that," Quincy remarked easily, "I established that fact almost immediately after my arrival this morning. Here are the steps by which I proceeded.

"Now, Burr, if you were going to murder a man by hanging him, and were an expert in the use of a lariat, you would have the choice in this case of two positions from which you could throw your rope. One would be to climb a tree and drop the noose over your man's head as he walked beneath; but you would hardly choose the darkness of a dense wood, at night, for the performance of the feat. The other method would be to first drape your rope across a limb, leaving plenty of slack, and then to lasso your man from the ground; but in that case you must need be very quick, or he would escape you while you were getting rid of your slack and drawing him up.

"Now Dobell wasn't caught by a man up a tree, because, if he had been, the man would have tied

his rope to the limb from which Dobell was suspended. He would never have hauled Dobell clear of the ground, held him swinging in the air until he died, lowered the body to the earth, climbed down and pulled the body up again, tying the rope to another tree. On the other hand, had a man thrown the rope from the ground, it would have been necessary for him to have pulled the body into the air, and a rope with a heavy weight suspended from it must necessarily have left a mark on the bark of the limb as it was drawn across. There was no such mark.

"You remember, Armitage, that I climbed into the tree and examined the limb this afternoon. I wanted to see if its bark had been disturbed in any way. I found that it had been scratched off in several places, which showed that somebody had been up there previous to my visit. If it had not been a murderer, and I have shown that it could not have been, then who was it? The only answer is that it must have been Dobell himself. Doctor Henderson has told us that Dobell could not have dropped that distance without breaking his neck. Granted; but he could have used the rope to slide down on. If you will examine the palms of his hands you will find on each a shiny groove where the rope wore the skin as he slid down.

"You will remember that I was very curious

regarding a pin which I found in Dobell's coat. I guessed from the pin that there must have been some sort of a message fastened to that particular spot. The pin was placed in such a position that whatever it had fastened must have been concealed by the lapel of his coat. That shows he did not intend to have the message found until his body was brought into the house. Armitage, however, in bringing the body here, was so unfortunate as to lose the note. I found it this afternoon and here it is."

He produced the note and read the brief message.

"DEAR TOM: This is the last. I can't stand this infernal wasting away any longer. Take the girl out of that hole you're living in, and send her to a good school. I've left her my money and you can have the house, to live in or to burn down, whichever you please. Good-bye. — SID."

"If you will compare the writing contained in the note to that of any of Dobell's private papers you will find that it is Dobell's," Quincy stated in conclusion.

"But I don't fully understand yet," Burr protested in bewilderment. "I could have sworn that my evidence was correct."

"My dear Burr," Quincy stated, "by a peculiar

coincidence there were two complete sets of evidence in this case, one leading to a false theory and one to the true. You chanced to follow the false clue. The whole affair merely furnishes another case where things are not what they seem."

VII

THE AFFAIR OF WILLIAM BAIRD, P. B.

QUINCY rose lazily and took the card which the doorboy handed in. "Thomas Selfridge," he read, glancing up to face the client who appeared almost on the heels of the boy. The man, he noted, was slender, and was well-dressed, almost to the point of fastidiousness, which, together with his gold-rimmed spectacles, gave him the appearance of a scholar, although his twinkling eyes and the humourous curves of his mouth belied any supposition that he might be a "bookworm."

"In what way can I serve you, Mr. Selfridge?" Quincy inquired, shoving forward a chair.

The man quietly removed his gloves and seated himself before replying. Then, turning his twinkling eyes fully on Quincy, he replied smilingly: "By catching a burglar for me."

Quincy nodded gravely. "I had surmised something of that nature. Now, if you will tell me your story, we shall, perhaps, be able to secure your man."

"Well, Mr. Sawyer, the story was brief and simple enough to begin with; but I meddled with the affair, and the result is that the story is now considerably longer, and no benefit has been derived through its lengthening. My wife and I live on Commonwealth Avenue with our three servants. We are both very fond of travelling and, during our numerous trips, we have gradually acquired many curios and strange pieces of bric-a-brac, some of them of great value and others worth little save as souvenirs and keepsakes. With these things we have gradually filled our home, until we have finally acquired a rather large collection, being drawn by certain sentimental ties to almost every article in our small museum.

"One evening, about ten days ago, we received a visit, unheralded and unsolicited, by the way, and, as we knew nothing of the visitor or of his coming, we were naturally surprised the following morning when a maid discovered that several of our most valuable curios were missing. A hasty search showed that our loss had amounted to about fifteen thousand dollars, and an additional search discovered this strange notice on the library table." As he finished speaking he produced what appeared to be an ordinary calling card and a folded slip of paper, silently handing both to Quincy.

The card, neatly engraved on bristol board of the

regulation size, held merely the legend: "William Baird, P. B."

"P. B.," Quincy mused. "That's a new affix. Doesticks, I believe, added P. B. to his name; but he translated it as meaning 'Perfect Brick.'"

He then unfolded the slip of paper, discovering that it was a form of printed receipt, reading:

"DEAR SIR OR MADAM: Strictly in the line of my profession I have appropriated certain articles which you have acquired by gift, purchase or otherwise; but which I now hold by right of possession. If I have taken anything to which sentimental feelings are attached, or about which hallowed associations cling, I shall be pleased to return the entire list to you, charges prepaid, upon receipt of $5,000, which amount I estimate to be much less than the real value of the articles.

"Address all communications to William Baird, Esq., Providence, R. I., General Delivery.

"P. S. Send bills only. No checks, postal or express orders."

The words "Providence, R. I.," were written in a blank space left for such insertions.

"He appears a trifle nervy, doesn't he?" Selfridge remarked with a dry smile, as Quincy finished reading.

"Yes and no," Quincy replied slowly. "At first glance this little printed slip with its address would appear decidedly nervy, but is it really, when you stop to consider the matter? The address, written in a blank, shows that he does not confine his activities to any one locality, and the chances are, therefore, that he has been playing his game for some time. Taking your own case into consideration, we might say that the class of men he preys upon are wealthy travellers or students. If they were not wealthy they could not afford the luxury of such valuable collections. Now, the sum he demands as ransom for his loot is comparatively small, much smaller, from your own computation, than the actual value of the articles themselves. Consequently, I think it is safe to argue that the ordinary man, of the type preyed upon, would much rather pay the price without a question than go to the trouble of hunting down the thief, and running the risk of newspaper notoriety. The average rich man, particularly if he is of the class of scholars, hates newspaper notes concerning himself worse than he hates poison. Thus, it may safely be argued that William Baird plies his trade comparatively free from danger, and finds it also a trade which brings him satisfactory returns. But there is more of your story to be told yet, I believe."

"Yes," Selfridge admitted. "As I said in the

first place, I meddled, and without satisfactory results. You argue well when you say that comparatively few collectors would hesitate in immediately complying with Baird's demands, rather than to contest the matter with him. I would have sent him the money at once had it not been for my wife. She is of the old Puritan stock, and is a born fighter when she thinks that her rights are being transgressed. I talked the matter over with her, and we decided to try out Mr. Baird and see if we could not gain some clue as to his identity. First I sent him a check for the amount, having previously arranged, of course, that the bank would not honour the check. My reply was a postal from Providence, which read: 'Read the P. S. on your circular.'

"I then had my wife write a letter to Baird, while I went to Providence and watched the General Delivery window, but nobody called for the letter so far as I could tell. Finally I did so myself, and the clerk told me there was nothing for William Baird. The question that then confronted me was where the letter had disappeared, in Boston, Providence or on the way. I made the acquaintance of a railway mail clerk, had another letter sent on his train, and paid him to make sure that it reached Providence. He reported to me by telegraph, after his train had passed through the city, telling me

that the letter had been delivered to the postoffice. I again applied at the General Delivery window, and this time the clerk looked at me suspiciously before telling me that William Baird's mail had been called for and delivered a few minutes previously. Of course, on both occasions, Mr. Baird had beaten me to the window and I had been spending my time watching an empty nest. There seemed nothing more for me to do in Providence, so I returned home to see if Baird would reply to my wife's letter.

"On my arrival I found that my wife had shown marked cleverness in her letter to Baird, striving to gain not only a reply from him, but also to allay any suspicions which the correspondence might raise in his mind. She told him that she objected to sending loose bills through the mail, and requested him to tell her more definitely exactly what she should do. This morning we received a reply which seems to indicate that, as yet, Mr. Baird's suspicions have not been aroused. He told her to send the money by registered mail. Now it seems to me that we have Mr. Baird in a nice little trap of his own making. My wife will send him a registered package, and then you and I will be on hand in Providence to interview him when he signs for it. Does the plan strike you favourably?"

Quincy nodded smilingly. "It seems to be the

only plan, does it not?" he inquired. "We have absolutely no clue as to the identity of William Baird, and there seems nothing for us to do except to follow along the lines you have laid down. I would suggest that you have your wife make up this package, and then we can go to Providence. Return here, when you are ready, and I shall accompany you."

Mr. Selfridge took his departure, after agreeing to the arrangement, and Quincy turned his attention to some office detail which he wished to clear up before leaving. Within ten minutes after the departure of Selfridge a second visitor appeared in Quincy's office. This visitor spent no time in interviewing the doorboy, but bolted unceremoniously into the room without even so much as "by your leave." Glancing sharply up, Quincy beheld Inspector Gates, of police headquarters, and grinned a welcome.

"Hello, Inspector," he greeted heartily. "What's the cause of all the confusion?"

Gates dropped rather wearily into a chair and produced his pipe. "I merely dropped in," he remarked with assumed carelessness, "to ask what you know about a gentleman who styles himself William Baird, P. B."

Quincy eyed the inspector in surprise. "What do I know about him!" he ejaculated. "Nothing

except that I am after him. Why, do you know him?"

"Indirectly," Gates replied with a decided trace of disgust in his tones. "I'm after him, too, and, as we have absolutely no record of him, nor information concerning him at headquarters, I thought I'd drop in and see if you had ever run across him. You have been engaged on his case?" he continued with increased interest.

"Yes," Quincy replied. "He made away with a quantity of bric-a-brac from the home of a gentleman here in Boston some time ago, and I have just been engaged to look him up. What trick of his has interested you?"

"Nothing that he did here, or, rather, nothing that he did here first, started me after him. He's done plenty since, though. I first heard of him yesterday afternoon when Captain Baldwin of Denver introduced himself at headquarters and told us he was tracing the man. Baird did a job in Denver some time ago, and Baldwin has just traced him to New England. He had a tip, picked up the Lord knows where, that Baird was due to pull off a stunt in Boston last night and he wanted help in nailing the man. I was detailed on the case and we went to work on it. According to Captain Baldwin's tip, Baird was going to pay a visit to Jacob Louisburg last night. You know of old Louisburg,

the retired theatrical magnate, and you know he has a young museum in his house that makes the Institute people green with envy every time they hear of it. So we drilled around to Louisburg's house, and set out to wait for Baird to come."

"And Baird got wind of your presence with the result that he failed to put in an appearance," Quincy interjected.

Gates grinned ruefully. "Oh, yes, he came all right. And, what is more, he got away with a couple of little gold and jewelled images, valued at about ten thousand dollars, from right under our noses. It was the slickest job I ever heard of, and maybe old Louisburg didn't put up a howl. Honest, I never really understood what a downright dub a police inspector is until he explained it to me this morning."

"But how was the job done?" Quincy questioned eagerly, laughing in spite of himself at the expression on Gates's face.

"I'm blessed if I know how it was done," Gates confessed. "Both Baldwin and myself were on the watch all night. Louisburg's collection is arranged in two big rooms, and Baldwin took one to watch while I had the other. I'll swear that not a soul entered my room all night long, yet this morning there was one of Baird's confounded receipts on

the table and, after Louisburg had gone over the list of stuff in the room, he discovered that the two images were gone. They had been standing on top of a case where nobody but an old idiot would have left them in the first place, and, of course, it was a cinch to lift them after a man once got into the room."

"They were in the room you were guarding?" Quincy inquired.

"Sure," said Gates with deepening disgust. "No such luck as to have them lifted from Baldwin's room. Of course they had to be nipped in mine, so as to give the whole force a chance to pass me the laugh."

"But somebody must have gotten in," Quincy said in slow perplexity.

"Of course somebody got in. Do you think I'm such a fool as to intimate that a ghost might have done the job? All I say is that I didn't see anybody, and I watched with all my eyes. The room isn't very big, and I'm blessed if I can understand how any person managed to enter it without my seeing him."

"You're absolutely certain of that? No person entered the room from the time you went in until you made the discovery?"

"Dead sure. Not a soul came into that room all night. Nobody that I saw, I mean."

"The things couldn't have been taken out first, could they?"

"No. I tried to ease my mind with that one, but, you see, Baldwin looked over the table before we separated and, what is more, I was sitting on it at the time. Neither of us saw the least sign of the paper. Had it been there, we must have seen it, as the table was absolutely bare of any covering or articles of any nature."

"You had the rooms darkened, of course, while you were watching?"

"Certainly. They were dark all night, but, after my eyes became used to the darkness, I was able to see dimly, and could have told if anybody had come in. Even if I couldn't have seen I must have heard them. You know how easy it is to hear even the slightest sound in the darkness when you are on the alert."

Quincy shook his head and puzzled for a moment. "Well, Inspector," he said finally, "I don't see that there is anything for you and Captain Baldwin to do except to join in the merry little chase to Providence. I have a clue that leads there, and I am perfectly willing to share it with you and the captain. The address on your circular said Providence, did it not?"

"Yes, Providence, General Delivery. Has your client arranged to bait him up to that point?"

"Not only that, but it is also arranged for him to call for a registered package. If we are on hand, we should be able to get our man or one of his confederates, between us all. Will you come?"

"Of course I will. There is nothing else for me to do. I'll get the captain, and we'll meet you at the South station. You can telephone me when you are ready to start."

After the inspector had departed Quincy called up Mr. Selfridge on the telephone, advised him of the proposed addition to their party, and made several changes in the plans that had previously been laid. At the conclusion of the interview he smoked silently and abstractedly for many minutes, appearing to arrive at no definite conclusion. When Selfridge appeared, however, he startled that worthy gentleman by abruptly declaring:

"It isn't possible. No, sir, it couldn't have been done. But what logical reason can Gates have for denying that he saw the man enter?"

The client blinked his eyes rapidly for a few moments, as though undecided whether to stand or to retreat. "I'm sure I can't tell, Mr. Sawyer," he ventured at last. "Perhaps, if I knew what you were talking about, I might hazard an opinion."

Quincy grinned. "Pardon my incoherent remarks, please," he said quietly. "The question is this: Can two inanimate objects remove themselves

from their original positions and, at the same time, leave one of our friend Baird's circulars behind them?"

"From such observations as I have been able to make, I should say not," Selfridge returned judicially.

"Then somebody must have removed them, or at least that would seem the inevitable conclusion. Now, how could that somebody have removed them from a room which was being carefully guarded by a man inside it?"

"I should consider that, also, impossible unless, perchance, the guard might have been asleep."

Quincy nodded gravely. "Yes, unless he was asleep or unless he had been in some way blinded."

Selfridge looked interested. "Would it be possible to blind a man temporarily without his feeling any after effects?"

"Yes, if he had been blinded subconsciously." Quincy scowled as he spoke the words, but, as they appeared to have no effect other than to further bewilder his client, he broke off abruptly. "I think we had better be getting down to the station. You followed my instructions in preparing the package?"

"To the letter."

In the early dusk of the evening the four men strolled down the sloping walk from the Providence

station in the direction of the postoffice, only a short distance away. Halfway down the walk Gates paused and pointed toward a narrow street, the end of which was overshadowed by low, wooden bar-rooms.

"Fountain Street," he observed, half turning toward his companions. "The police headquarters building is a short distance up that street, if you should want to find it for any reason."

Quincy and Selfridge paid but little attention to the street, both being fairly familiar with Providence; but Captain Baldwin gazed at it with interest, and appeared to be carefully fixing its location in his mind.

"Are you going to take the Providence police in on this?" he asked.

"No," Gates replied. "This particular quest is Mr. Sawyer's. If we use up his clue without any results, we may be obliged to go to them for help, but, out of respect to Mr. Sawyer, we cannot do so until we have first made a failure. You are in command of this section of the chase, Sawyer. What are your suggestions?"

Quincy acknowledged the reference to his temporary leadership with a brief nod. "My first suggestion is that we divide the watching of the postoffice. Suppose you take the first watch, Gates, from now until ten o'clock. Then Captain Baldwin

can go on until one, after which Mr. Selfridge can take it up until four, while I go on for the final watch of the night. That will give us all time in which to secure some sleep while the work will be done better than would be probable if we took it at longer intervals."

"I am agreed," Baldwin spoke bluntly. "By the way, Mr. Selfridge, what is in that package — money or stuffing?"

Quincy broke in before Selfridge could reply. "The money is there. We want to take the man with the goods on him. He won't have the bric-a-brac, of course; but, if he has the money, we'll have something on him, whether he's Baird or just a confederate. That will give us full authority to hold him until we can make a clean-up of the entire gang."

Baldwin glanced at him sharply from under his heavy eyebrows, but merely nodded in reply, as the four reached the postoffice and Gates disappeared for the first round of the watch. The others made their way at once to a hotel, where they arranged for the accommodation of all four.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Quincy again emerged from the hotel and, accompanied by Captain Baldwin, made his way toward the postoffice for the purpose of relieving Gates. Outside the

building Quincy paused, allowing the captain to enter alone. Gates appeared almost immediately.

"Nothing doing," he announced. "I've watched that window like a cat over a mouse hole, but nobody of interest to us has appeared."

"The night is young as yet, Gates," Quincy replied. "I have a feeling that Captain Baldwin is going to discover something, and that it might be well for us to wait here in some inconspicuous corner."

Gates did not appear particularly sanguine regarding the possibility, but, as he offered no objection, the two stowed themselves away in the shadow cast by an abutment. For half an hour their vigil was unrewarded, and Gates was beginning to stir impatiently, when Quincy suddenly seized him by the arm.

"There!" he exclaimed, pointing toward a man just emerging from the further door of the building.

"Baldwin, sure enough," Gates answered in an undertone. "And he must have picked up the scent, to judge from the way he hikes off. Shall we catch up with him?"

"No, just keep him in sight, that is all. If he has found the scent, let him have the credit for the arrest. We'll keep just near enough to be of assistance in case he needs us."

"He has his eye on somebody," exclaimed Gates, as they moved rapidly along. "See, he is following that man ahead of him."

"Apparently," Quincy agreed. "But where did the man come from? I didn't see him leave the postoffice."

"He probably came out through another door."

"Then why didn't Baldwin follow him that way?"

Gates pondered the question for a moment. "Probably he was afraid of being seen. Anyhow, it's a dead cinch to pick up the trail of a man who leaves by almost any door of that building when the streets are as clear of traffic as they now are. But, hello, what have we here?" He broke off suddenly as first the quarry and then Baldwin disappeared around the corner of the low-studded bar-room that marked the corner of Fountain Street.

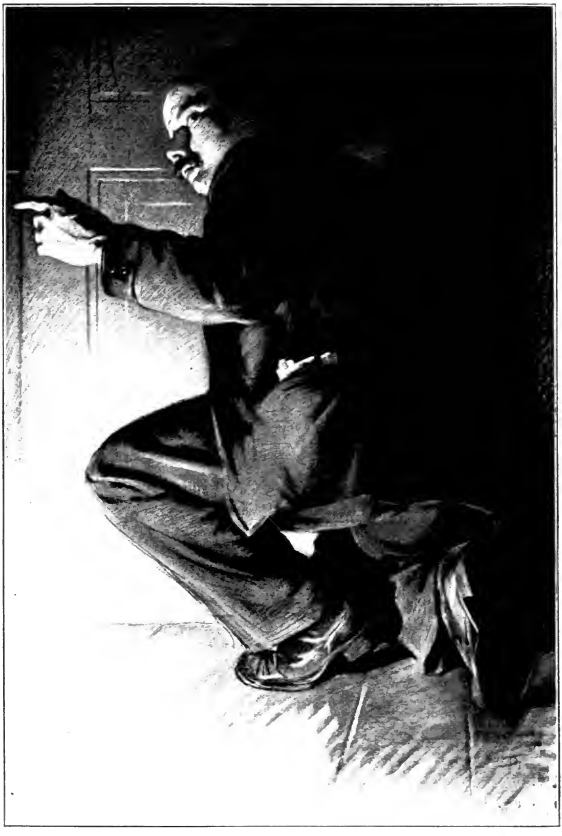
They quickened their pace and soon turned the corner. As they did so the lights in the saloon whipped out, showing that the hour of closing had arrived. A few men were grouped on the sidewalk before it, far up the street they could discern the hurrying form of Baldwin; but nowhere could they catch sight of the man whom he had been following. Hurrying forward through the poorly lighted street, they saw Baldwin turn another corner and, viewing him from an angle caused by the

arrangement of the streets, they saw him step quickly into the side door of the corner building. Arrived at the point of his disappearance they paused somewhat mystified.

"For Heaven's sake," Gates muttered, staring about him. With an air of utter bewilderment he gazed at the Church House on the opposite side of the street, and then allowed his eyes to wander slowly to the right, where they rested on the massive police building towering above them. "Now what in the world do you suppose he expects to find here under the very windows of the station?"

Quincy uttered a low laugh. "The best way to find out is to follow him." And, suiting the action to the word, they slipped into the building.

Up a flight of dimly lighted stairs they quietly stole, with ears strained to catch the slightest sound which might act as a guide. Sounds there were in plenty for, from a room at the head of the stairway, loud voices sounded in seeming altercation, although the words were so blurred as not to be distinguishable. A door stood slightly ajar and, pushing it open, they cautiously entered, pausing in surprise on the threshold when they beheld Baldwin kneeling at the further end of the room, his ear to the keyhole of another door. He saw them from the tail of his eye and held up his hand in token of silence, at the same time beckoning them



"HELD UP HIS HAND IN TOKEN OF SILENCE."

to come closer. The words from the other room became distinguishable as they approached, but the tongue was one which neither could understand.

Baldwin eyed them disgustedly as they drew near. "I made an ass of myself," he announced in a low whisper, "and followed the wrong man. Don't be afraid to whisper. They can't hear you above all that racket."

"But how do you know you followed the wrong man?" Gates demanded.

"There were two at the window at the same time, and I couldn't crowd close enough to make certain which one signed for Baird's package. I followed this fellow, the one who's doing so much talking. He's talking Dutch and I understand it. Just now he's explaining to the landlord why he can't pay his room rent. I made a mess of things, that's all."

Gates glared at him with savage disgust. "You're a bird of a police captain, you are," he blurted, utterly forgetting the need for caution. "Followed the wrong man! How do you know you did? Why don't you nab that fellow, and pluck him, if you can talk his rank jabber. He may be only stalling his landlord and may know more about this than you give him credit for."

For a moment the captain, seemingly stung by Gates' remarks, hesitated uncertainly, his hand on

the doorknob and a look of indecision in his eyes. "No," he said at last, turning from the door. "It would do no good. I'm morally certain that he is the wrong man, and that I've balled things up. I suggest that we return to the hotel and rest up until tomorrow when, perhaps, we shall be able to get some kind of a line on this case. What do you think, Mr. Sawyer?"

To Gates' complete and unconcealed disgust, Quincy agreed with the proposition and the three, the disgruntled Gates hanging sullenly in the rear, made their way once more to the street.

"You fellows may be a pair of wise old owls, but I'm blamed if I see it," Gates stormed, as they stood on the sidewalk. "Here, Baldwin says that he followed the wrong man; but he won't do anything about it to make sure that he did, and Sawyer passes up the hand on somebody else's say-so. It's all right for you, Baldwin, and for you, Sawyer; but think of me! You fellows haven't had a pair of valuable images pinched from before your very eyes and you aren't the laughing stock of your whole crowd. I'm up against it good and proper, and, if I don't get this man, my chances of promotion are shoved back about five years. I'm boss tomorrow, remember that, and you can bet that, if I get on the track of a man who has the least suspicion hitched to him, he'll sweat some before he can give us the

slip. That man, Baird, seems to have this whole crowd buffaloed and hoodooed, and the chances are he's on his way to a thousand miles from here by now," he concluded ruefully.

As neither Quincy nor Baldwin appeared desirous of answering the criticisms, and as Gates could fix his mind on nothing else, the walk back to the hotel was accomplished in silence. Once there, the three filed slowly up to Mr. Selfridge's room, where they proceeded to rout that eager gentleman out of bed.

"Did you get anything?" Selfridge demanded anxiously as, clad in a dressing gown, he hastily threw open the door.

"Did we get anything," Gates growled explosively, crowding into the room, and throwing himself angrily into a chair. "Yes, we got stung, that's what we got. Huh! It's sure a peach of a sensation to work with men who'll trail a party right down to earth, and then let him go because he tells his landlord he can't pay his rent. And to think that I let 'em take the direction of this thing away from me," he wailed in conclusion.

"You don't mean to say that the man got away from you!" Selfridge exclaimed, staring in consternation from one to another of the trio.

"Yes, he got away," Captain Baldwin affirmed

shortly, a tinge of bitterness at Gates' contempt creeping into his tones.

"I wonder if he did."

At the words the men turned simultaneously toward where Quincy sat thoughtfully staring at the ceiling, their faces characteristic of their varied natures. Baldwin's eyebrows arched, and his face assumed an expression of polite inquiry; Selfridge's face showed frank expectation; while Gates sneered openly at any idea which Quincy might now be about to advance. For several seconds Quincy continued to stare fixedly at the ceiling without offering the least explanation for his remark, then suddenly, and without allowing any chance for preparation, he demanded:

"Gates, presupposing that a given man is neither a liar nor a fool, in what class shall we place him when he tells us an impossible lie?"

Gates' expression of scorn weakened slightly at the question, and he stared suspiciously. "Who is the man, and what are the conditions?" he demanded finally.

"You are the man," Quincy enlightened him, "and the conditions are these. You were on guard when two costly images were stolen from within a few feet of you, and a curious receipt left in their place. I know you too well to think that you were asleep, so that phase of the question is done away

with. You swear positively, however, that nobody entered the room while you were watching. Inanimate objects do not make away with themselves. That leaves two possibilities; either you are a liar, which I know you are not, or else you took them yourself. Which are we to believe?"

At the question Gates sprang angrily to his feet, his face livid at the accusation. For a moment he stuttered incoherently, but Quincy softly waved him aside.

"Oh, Gates, Gates," he murmured reproachfully, "will you never learn to think for yourself, or to get away from the consideration of things that are patently impossible? Arrest William Baird, P. B., who sits over there masquerading under the name of Captain Baldwin, and between us we shall tell you a story."

Had Quincy picked up the centre table and hurled it at one of his companions, he could not have created greater consternation than did his nonchalant accusation. Gates paused with half-open mouth and eyes fixed on Quincy's face, while the others seemed too utterly dumfounded to move.

The first to regain his senses, apparently, was Baldwin, for, with a quick sidelong lurch, he threw himself toward the door. But a surprise awaited him, for the door was locked. Quincy had quietly attended to that on entering. Making the discovery

of the locked door Baldwin turned at bay, seemingly with some hope of fighting his way to the open window.

Before he could move, however, Gates, accepting Quincy's statement, coupled with Baldwin's own attempt to escape, as sufficient proof, was upon him. Baldwin ducked lightly under the inspector's arm, flinging Gates aside with a sharp blow, and leaped toward the window. But it was the quiet Selfridge who blocked that plan of escape. As Baldwin passed, Selfridge, without moving from his chair, coolly extended his foot and Baldwin fell heavily to the floor. Before he could move again Gates had seized him with a relentless grip and had jerked him to his feet.

"So it was you, was it?" Gates snarled, wrestling the heavier man back to his chair. "You've played me for a sucker right along, but your game is finished now. Sit down and tell us your yarn."

Baldwin seated himself, staring straight into Gates' outraged eyes as he did so. "You have no right to question me and I refuse to talk," he affirmed doggedly.

"You are perfectly within your rights, sir," Quincy assured him, "and it is not necessary for you to talk anyway." With a sudden deft movement he leaned forward and plucked a package from the inner pocket of Baldwin's coat. "Have you

ever seen that before?" he inquired, tossing it to Selfridge.

"My package!" Selfridge exclaimed, seizing it eagerly.

"Wait!" Quincy cautioned him sharply, as Selfridge was about to run his finger beneath the seal. "Save it intact for the trial. We three can witness that it was taken from Baldwin's pocket, and it will carry more weight if you can give a straight account of its contents before it is opened. Now, if you wish, I am ready to give you my story of the affair."

"Wish!" Gates snorted. "Do you think I could keep my wits in my head another twenty-four hours if you shouldn't pass on an explanation of this thing? How did you come to settle on that — that — wolf in sheep's clothing over there?" The term did not seem to satisfy the inspector's desires, but he allowed it to pass, accompanied by a glare in Baldwin's direction.

"Very simple, Gates," Quincy informed him with a smile. "I had my suspicions from the first. You see the entire matter amounted to just this: You were on watch when the articles were stolen and the slip of paper left in their place. Very naturally the things must have been taken either with or without your consent. I passed by the first supposition as improbable. Therefore, if they were

taken without your consent, why didn't you raise the alarm? Obviously you did not do so because you were not aware that they were being taken. But, on the other hand, how could they have been taken without your becoming aware of the fact?

"The only answer I could discover was that they were taken by somebody whose presence in the room you would not have noticed, whose presence you would have been practically unconscious of. Do you understand what I mean? I mean a person who could have entered the room, and whose entrance you would not take into account when you figured the case up later. So far as I could discover, there were but two persons who could have done that thing. One was Jacob Louisburg himself and the other was Captain Baldwin. I was even inclined to leave Mr. Louisburg out of the problem, for I doubted if even he could have entered without your having taken particular note of his presence.

"Consequently, everything appeared to point toward Captain Baldwin. He undoubtedly could have strolled into the room a dozen times on various pretexts and his visits would have left no impression on your mind because you regarded him as a sort of second self in this particular affair. If necessary he could have made a separate trip to secure each of the images, which were so small he could

easily have concealed them in his pockets, and then another trip for the purpose of leaving the receipt. Another point against him was the fact that he knew an attempt was to be made on Louisburg's valuables, but carefully refrained from mentioning the source of his information.

"That was my working plan when I started. I watched Captain Baldwin most carefully from the time of our leaving Boston until he went on watch at the postoffice tonight. His interest in the contents of the package strengthened my suspicions, although I must admit that, outside of that particular incident, I was unable to discover anything against him up to the time of his leaving the postoffice. I placed him on the second watch because I wished to have you, Gates, with me when the captain made a move, presupposing that he would do so.

"He did just what I expected him to do. That is, he waited to give us time in which to get well away from the place, and then calmly claimed the package and took his departure. He did not expect to be discovered; but he soon found that you and I were following him, upon which he resorted to the scheme of pretending to follow a fourth man, who happened along as a most fortunate coincidence. He either followed the man into the place where we discovered him, or else he allowed the man to

slip away while he himself went into the first convenient building, allowing us to see him enter in order to insure our following him. His bluff when we discovered him was a most clever one, and, for all I know, he may have told us the truth about the conversation which we overheard. Do you mind informing us on that point, Captain?"

Captain Baldwin grinned at the question, his self-possession appearing to have returned during Quincy's recital. "To tell the truth, Mr. Sawyer," he admitted, "that man may have been preaching a sermon for all I know to the contrary. I never heard his lingo before." He paused a moment and appeared undecided as to his next step, but soon broke out abruptly: "I may as well pass up my hand, I suppose. You fellows have me with the goods and there is no use in my bluffing any further. You have the story about right, Mr. Sawyer. Somehow, when I first received Mr. Selfridge's check, and then the pieces of correspondence, I became alarmed. I had a hunch that he had turned the case over to somebody, and I was considerably puzzled as to what I should do. My first impulse was to light out at once, and I wish now that I had followed it.

"I finally decided to run up to Boston to discover what I might. The closer behind a hound you are the less liable he is to pick up your scent, and so I

faked up a few credentials and presented myself at police headquarters as Captain Baldwin of Denver. I further ingratiated myself by foretelling the attempt on Louisburg's house, and proved that my prophecy was correct." He paused a moment to grin at Gates. "When we came here I planned to proceed much as you have outlined in your summing up of the case, Mr. Sawyer. I would get the package, taking a chance that there might be a little money in it, and leave Providence behind. I still had the original articles, so the trip should pay me fairly well. Your laying for me outside the post-office was something I hadn't counted on, and, when I discovered you there, I began to get the first scare of my career. From there on you have outlined the matter correctly, almost abnormally, I may say."

"You have operated elsewhere, then?" Selfridge inquired with interest.

"That is hardly a fair question, Mr. Selfridge," Baldwin replied with a faint smile. "Remember, I am under arrest, and I have no wish to confess to anything that may set against me. Now, gentlemen, I am ready to assist you in recovering the particular articles which are missing in this case and in that of Mr. Louisburg."

"Just one more question," Selfridge begged. "What is the meaning of the letters P. B.?"

Baldwin favoured him with a grin. "That question, Mr. Selfridge, is almost on a par with your previous one. It is possible, however, that the letters may stand for 'Professional Burglar.'"

THE END.

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